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Is The Place of Power Empty? Reading Claude Lefort in South Africa

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Supervisors: Professor Lawrence Hamilton and Professor Stephen Louw

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ABSTRACT

The thesis looks at both the flexibility and rigidity of South African politics. Using Claude Lefort's theory of the 'Empty Place of Power', I compare the three main political parties in South Africa, namely: the African National Congress, Economic Freedom Fighters and the Democratic Alliance, and investigate how they construct the notion of 'the people' within the context of the Afrophobia and Xenophobia debate. I use some of Lefort's key concepts such as the 'Ontology of the Social' and the 'Dissolution of the Markers of Certitude' to frame an argument of how these concepts can be read through the policies of the said political parties. I then analyse the level of openness in these parties and whether or not they meaningfully represent the people within the broader debate of citizenship and foreign nationals. I conclude by suggesting that all three parties base the identity of the people onto something grounded either in the race-nationalist conception of identity or a political articulation of community, and thus, that the place of power is not entirely empty.

DECLARATION

I declare that this thesis is my own unaided work. It is submitted for the degree of Master of Arts in Political Studies (by coursework and research report) at the University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg. It has not been submitted before for any other degree or examination in any other university.



Signature [Mpho Cecil Tladi]

DEDICATION

This thesis is dedicated to my teacher, the late Peter Allanson Hudson.

Un géant intellectuel

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My late grandmother who has recently left us. Her departure came during the completion of this project. I searched in the treasure trove of my memories with and of her until I managed to find the peace to continue the endless reading and writing.

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My Mother and Father, for their support. They have so much faith in me and this is all I need. It is through their passion for learning that I was inspired to further my studies.

Peter Hudson, a prolific individual who had sheer mastery over the command of the many languages of political discourse. The analysis, the explanations, the vocabulary – I learnt the term 'sui genris' (unique) from him, his coffee breath in the mornings of our lectures and the endless hand gestures whenever he was emphasising a point. I could never have imagined writing about French philosophy nor making sense of conceptualising how we can think about power in South Africa in such an open, constructive and approachable manner had it not been for Peter. There is indeed value in western thought only in so far as it opens up the space for us to negotiate multiple solutions for the future of post-coloniality from its own struggles for freedom.

My supervisors Professor Lawrence Hamilton and Professor Stephen Louw for making the process of completing this project not too burdensome. I am honoured to be taught by such humble legends of academia.

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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

> Modern democratic society seems to me, in fact, like a society in which power, law and knowledge are exposed to a radical indetermination, a society that has become the theatre of an uncontrollable adventure, so that what is instituted never becomes established.[1]

According to Claude Lefort, political life in a modern democracy is a continual debate on the question of who it is that speaks in the name of the people. I want to interrogate whether this is the case in South Africa. My thesis will be a study on all the aspects mentioned in this opening sentence, to wit:

1) political life,
2) a modern democracy,
3) continual debate,
4) who speaks in the name of 'the people', and
5) how various political role players in the country construct the concept of the people.

I want to explore if South Africa qualifies to be called a democracy in the language of Lefort. I will not be conducting an audit, however, I will be exploring the details of certain manifestos and policies of three of the main political parties in South Africa; namely the African National Congress (ANC), the Economic Freedom Fighters (EFF) and the Democratic Alliance (DA). I will be looking specifically at the idea of the people concerning the afrophobic and xenophobic attacks in South Africa. I want to understand how each of these parties position themselves within this volatile space in their different constructs of the notion of the people. I want to draw on Lefort's understanding of the empty place of power under democratic conditions, whereby political life, or, as Lefort puts it, the political as the proper 'field of interrogation'. Since in the context of a democracy, power can be understood as

[1] Lefort, C. (1986). *The Political Forms of Modern Society Bureaucracy, Democracy, Totalitarianism*. Cambridge: Polity Press. p. 305

a place that can never be filled but always emptied. In other words, Lefort sees the social as having an absence of a positive foundation, an indication that the empty place of power means that society is not built on a fixed foundation. The place remains as a dimension that stays operative, even when emptied of power. Power cannot disappear, but the place can be emptied whilst remaining.

I want to explore whether South Africa operates from a premise whereby our democracy does indeed recognise that there is no rightful occupant of the place of power, or is our democracy different from the one presented by Lefort. In other words, how democratic is South Africa? More specifically how democratic are the political parties in South Africa? Let us consider the matter in accordance with a Lefortian reading to ascertain whether we are truly able to claim that a democratic society is represented by South African political parties. My thesis is therefore about the framing of 'the people' in South African political discourse, based on a close reading of Lefort as well as some of the concepts he and other theorists use, such as the distinction and movement between pre-democratic, democratic and totalitarian forms of society. And how these are tied to the idea of the indeterminacy or determinacy of the social. I will draw from the works of Oliver Marchart as well as Bernard Flynn, who both interpret Lefort. To do this they utilise the work of Ferdinand de Saussure, particularly his terminology of the 'signifier' and the 'signified', which I discuss later. Lefort argues that society is constructed in a symbolic way, meaning it is subject to change (it is contingent). Society can be deconstructed and reconstructed in many ways, and South Africa is no exception. Because the social is never finally fixed, this means it is contestable, publicly so in a democratic state. A non-democratic state, by contrast, seeks finally to ground the social on absolute foundations, to mould it into something determinate and fixed. Therefore, I will look at how South Africa's political parties feel the country should be constituted politically, and if they create a space for the place of power to remain publicly empty. For instance, in their pronouncements, do these political parties allow the question for debate on Afrophobia and Xenophobia to be open or closed? What processes do they follow in this regard or what is the degree of the closing and opening?

The reason for choosing this debate is because racial politics is already a highly politicized space in South Africa, but only in terms of black and white. Very little attention is paid to the question of Xenophobia and Afrophobia. In terms of my discussion I think it would be interesting to see how the notion of the people considers non-citizens. Furthermore, using this example has value in the way foreigners are identified, and what role they have in the broader distribution of power. In other words, do foreigners enjoy the same kind of freedom as South Africans? If we define the people as one, then

the debate on foreign nationals is a useful prism to test this hypothesis. I discuss this question throughout the thesis.

Finally, the ANC, for example, has a sub-committee on issues related specifically to social transformation, and under this sub-committee is another sub-committee that deals with peace and stability and here they look at how best they can create an environment which is open to all kinds of nationalities. However, what I seek to examine is the extent to which the ANC, however subtly, sees itself as the embodiment of 'the people', and, in so doing, closes the space for consultation i.e. closes the constitutive space of the political. Similarly, does the EFF have the conceptual vocabulary that allow this question to be subject to meaningful political debate? This question applies to the DA as well. The Lefortian litmus test I am proposing equally includes the DA particularly because of its liberal-democratic nature.

CHAPTER 2

THE EMPTY PLACE OF POWER

2.1. Introduction

> Drawing on Lacan's notion of the symbolic as barred or 'not-all', Lefort's thought can be seen as a consistent investigation into the extent to which society cannot be taken to be a consistent whole since, for Lefort, society is without a stable foundation or essence. Lacking a stable foundation or essence the only way society can constitute itself is through an internal splitting or through a process of differentiating itself from itself. For Lefort, society can only gain its identity through instituting a division between itself and itself as other.[2]

Claude Lefort (21 April 1924 – 3 October 2010) was a French phenomenologist who had a keen interest in the revival of political philosophy. His work has become renowned for its vastness in contributing to democratic theory in particular.[3] He bases much of his understanding of thought as a never-ending form of interrogation which does not have a constitutive foundation. He asserts that no one can define and make constructs from a process of interrogation because in interrogation one is always asking questions. Lefort in simple terms understands that it is the absence of a foundation that serves as the only true foundation. The notion of the empty place of power comes from the idea that the particular institutional form of politics cannot be directly derived from, or read off, the ontology of the social. 'Power does not disappear' rather it is its 'place' which is emptied whilst the 'place' remains – as a 'dimension [that] stays operative'.[4] Marchart describes Lefort as a contingency theorist because Lefort is concerned about the realm of the uncertain within the ontology of the social. He sees

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[2] Karayiannides, E. (2016) *Lacan Against the Radical Democrats: Logic, Sexuation and Why We Should Insist Upon the Primacy of the Class Antagonism*, Honours Research Paper, Department of Political Studies University of the Witwatersrand, p. 7

[3] Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press. p. 85

[4] Ibid. p. 86

the social as having an absence of a positive foundation, an indication by the empty place of power that society is not built on solid ground.[5] That is why power can be understood as a place that may never be filled (its ontic content may disappear), but may always be emptied in the context of democracy. The understanding of philosophy and political concepts according to Lefort lies in the opening of the process of interrogation. Marchart expands on this observation by saying that, 'rather in opening up an indeterminate field for interrogation they (Lefort's concepts of the political and politics) indicate the very absence of a positive foundation for thinking and acting.'[6] Lefort develops his argument of the political as the proper 'field of interrogation' from the knowledge that philosophy is the constant questioning of 'what transgresses the limits of every particular social domain'. The political dimension therefore always opens up the boundaries of every particular social domain, and it operates on the logic of inquiry into the 'origin of the principle of differentiation between social spheres (or social systems) in modernity'.[7]

While Lefort does not use much of Saussure's[8] terminology of the 'signifier' and 'signified', both Marchart and Flynn make use of Saussure in articulating Lefort's philosophy of democracy and totalitarianism.[9] The symbolic does not have any external foundation, it is 'sui generis' and its structure consists of a system of 'signifiers'. It has its own specificity; it does not reflect anything above it – like a transcendental god – or anything below it – such as nature. The idea of the 'signifier' is perhaps best captured in the example of the logic of the use of colour. In the colour spectrum, the meaning of each colour is a product of a system of distinguished meanings. For example, the colour brown can only be understood in its relation to the other colours on a spectrum. The same logic applies to all the other colours. For Lefort society is structured in the same way – it is a symbolic construction of society. Lefort stresses this because it allows one to draw attention to the contingent. Society can be reorganised in different ways. We witness this in the movement between different forms of society, from pre-democratic to democratic and from democratic to totalitarian. Society can be deconstructed and reconstructed in different ways. Marchart elaborates in the following sentence:

[5] Ibid.
[6] Ibid. p. 88
[7] Ibid. p. 89
[8] Saussure, F. (1974). *Course in General Linguistics*, Fontana
[9] Marchart and Flynn see the value in Lefort's understanding of the ontological dimension and extend his usage of Saussure in order to further their Structuralist thought. However, Laclau was the initiator behind incorporating Lefort into 'post-Structuralist' readings, and Lefort himself was influenced by Lacan whose works abound with the language of the signifier.

> …political facts are differentially determined vis-à-vis their relation to other particular facts such as, for instance, economic, juridical and aesthetic facts.[10]

The social does not have a fixed structure, it is indeterminate. It is therefore not possible for anyone or any group of people to hold the place of power. Marchart explains that occupying a place without acknowledging the basic distinctions in society would mean that one is denying their situatedness in the world.[11] The distinctions in society are what make society meaningful for 'us' to understand. Marchart refers to this argument concerning science, and how it always works to enhance neutrality and objectivity, in other words, science wants to give society a fixed structure to rest upon. In Lefort's understanding, it is only democracy as a political form that recognises the indeterminacy of the social, because it does not impose any final goals on society. The basic idea of a democracy is that the debate around justice is a never-ending one. That is why under democracy there are elections. It is the one political form that opens up the political space to allow for a never-ending debate about legitimacy, authority, etc. Democracy recognises that there is no rightful place of power. My project seeks to expound on Lefort's analysis of democracy and the empty place of power. Using Marchart, Flynn and Jacques Lacan, I draw from their accounts on political thought to explain that for a democratic society to remain democratic, it must recognise the need for an empty place of power. According to Marchart, to occupy this 'place' is an illusion, if one does not consider basic distinctions in society. Using Lacan's example, Flynn notes the relationship between subjectivity and the mirror, that the image reflected by the mirror is always a misrepresentation.

> In the worst of cases, the ego, the reflected image from the mirror or from the eyes of the other, can foreclose the subject's placement in the symbolic order which is the domain of non-identity and indetermination.[12]

The foreclosure can be understood in the example made by Machiavelli in *The Discourses*, as Flynn points to Machiavelli's assertion that uncontested power becomes corrupt. For Lefort, a totalitarian regime forecloses the area of contestation. When institutions of contestation are destroyed and leaders of totalitarian regimes act as if they are one with the people – according to Flynn, when they incarnate the people – this pretention makes it possible for their ambition to become limitless, at this point they

[10] Op. Cit. p. 87
[11] Ibid.
[12] Flynn, B. (2005). *The Philosophy of Claude Lefort Interpreting the Political*. 1st ed. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press p. 35

become corrupt. Under totalitarianism, the domain of indetermination is foreclosed. This analysis is useful to the pre-democratic and democratic context, to give a broader understanding of Lefort's philosophy of the empty place of power.

2.2. The Political as the Proper 'Field of Interrogation'

In a democracy as well as in a totalitarian state, the political dimension is always publicly present and may be regarded as the point of indetermination within a democratic environment. The main difference is that under democracy the political remains open-ended but under totalitarianism the possibilities to come out of the political sphere are limited. For example, totalitarian regimes do hold regular elections, but usually, these are not open to members outside the dominant political party. The outcomes of these elections are predictable. According to Lefort, the political should not be bound by the social, or limited within the confines of power relations. Totalitarian regimes try to bind the social, however, the political is the point of misrecognition and recognition, which is why it should not be bound. Lefort argues that:

> The French Revolution is, however, the moment when all discourse acquires an import within the generality of the social, when its political dimension becomes explicit, and it therefore enables the historian to recognize the political dimension in areas where it was invisible under the Ancien Regime.[13]

For Lefort, the political is not only about examining the ideology of the day, but it is also about analysing the social practices that form part of experiencing the world. This explanation captures the explicit nature of the political in the context of the French Revolution. The notion of indeterminacy comes to the open, and into full light at the moment when a fracture appears in a society and when the social structure becomes visible i.e. when the reality of the foundations of the imaginary and the symbolic nature of the social begin to appear. This is the point where the people begin to discover the significance of the imaginary and the symbolic.[14] These senses had been invisible under the Ancien Regime because power under monarchical rule could never be contested – it was absolute. Flynn adds that, according to Lefort, modernity is the 'disincarnation' of society since there is no figure which would incarnate society's identity and mark the point at which it would be a society linked to 'another place', such as a king. There is no final knowledge of how society should be constructed. In the

[13] Lefort, C. (1988a). *Democracy and Political Theory*. 1st ed. London: Polity Press. P. 93
[14] Ibid.

movement from a pre-modern society to a democratic one, all the certitude of a divine will or transcendental foundation disappears and in its place, there is debate – the debate around a legitimate form of social organisation.[15]

Under democracy, no one can claim the absolute right to rule. Equally, and the significance of this will become apparent when we explore the claims made by the ANC, EFF, and the DA, no one can claim an absolute (i.e. a pre-political, or foundational) basis upon which to delineate legitimate membership or exclusion from the political itself. Thus, Lefort grounds his argument on debate, which is the point of differentiation between social systems. It is the political meaning of such a phenomenon which is important because it 'raises the question as to the very form and institution of society'.[16] Therefore, the essence of the constitution of the social space is the political, as a double-movement, 'whereby the mode of [the] institution of society appears and is obscured.' The process of society's division becomes visible in the political and becomes obscured in politics because of a clear disincarnation of the social, while the political is also an attempt at giving power a particular and legitimate place – incarnation. Under democracy politics cannot happen unless division happens, the political institutes the social. It is the 'grounding' or 'form-giving dimension' of society. Democracy recognises division, and unlike under totalitarianism, democracy does not destroy division – it welcomes antagonisms at the level of ontology.

2.3. On the Significance of Elections

The place of power can be understood as the universal. Elections are the moment when the universal is filled (temporarily) by the particular, i.e. a political party or a leader. One particular imposes itself on society under the universal law of social cohesion, however, it is not universal in the sense of the 'real' - it only occupies its place. Under modernity, elections are the freeing up of the subject. The subject is reduced to a number, a vote, and the people (the subject as a collective) become a people as 'real' which is the symbolic constituted through everyday discourse. Marchart argues that no society can exist unless it alienates itself from itself, by looking at itself in relation to an 'other'. Elections constitute an intersectional moment in a society, where the people become a 'vanishing mediator' [17] where power is suspended, in the movement from indecision to decision, from

[15] Flynn, B. (2005). *The Philosophy of Claude Lefort Interpreting the Political*. 1st ed. Evanston, Illinois: North-western University Press introduction xxiv

[16] Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press p. 89

[17] Hudson, P, Exceptional State Lecture, 2015-08-07

disincarnation to incarnation, where the particular becomes the universal. There is no way the universal can equally and without loss accommodate all particulars. A circulation of power in modernity is constituted by elections, and by the fact that no particular has the right to occupy the place of the universal. In describing the nature of elections Lefort argues that:

> The modern experience is that of the indefinite, the loss of certainty, the frequenting of the unknown, or, one might say, the experience of the unconscious of psychoanalysis. On a more prosaic level, one could cite the experience of the unpredictable outcomes of elections upon which important issues depend.[18]

In essence, elections are indefinite, moreover, they reveal the indefinite nature of power under modernity in general and in democracy in particular. This is how democracy legitimates itself. There are unpredictable outcomes in each election and each outcome is never final in the sense that power circulates, then the legitimacy of democracy is, in fact, the idea that no one is in control. Elections are predetermined but their outcome is not. Contestation exists as the constitution of the social form of democracy and the outcome of elections is always subject to change – it is never final.

2.4. Contrasting the Democratic Form of the Social with Classical Marxism

Karl Marx sees the history of the social as going through a predetermined and necessary set of stages and ultimately culminating in communism. For Marx communism is the final form of the social, it assumes absolute knowledge about the course of history. He sees the ontology of the social not as indeterminate but as determined. Communism is, therefore, the foreclosure of the space of political contestation. It fixes the symbolic structure by barring it. Under Marxism, there is no space for democracy as a system that wants to achieve its temporary stages of reorganising society – that recognises its indeterminacy – because Marxism defines history as absolute. Marxism orders history in a certain trajectory, for instance, at one point in time there is pre-communism then feudalism, at another there is capitalism and at the final point, the social becomes communism. In Marxism, the fixed nature of the social happens periodically whereas in totalitarianism it becomes constituted. The conception of knowledge is absolutist. Totalitarianism does not wait for the social to structure itself over time because its goal is already predetermined. There is no need for totalitarian states to make assessments of the social through an incremental change like under communism. It is more aggressive

[18] Lefort, C. (1988a). *Democracy and Political Theory.* 1st ed. London: Polity Press. P. 156

and in some instances extremely violent. Two examples Lefort writes about are the extermination of the Jews under Nazi Germany and Stalin's violent massacre of political opponents and mass murders of peasants through Dekulakization in the Soviet Union.[19]

According to Peter Hudson, the major texts of Marx himself exhibit an 'ontological necessity and epistemological absolutism'.[20] For instance, in the case of universal suffrage, Marx never asks the question of 'choice'.[21] He does not, for instance, in Lefort's words consider the requirement of a 'change' in the economy of power,[22] i.e. whether at the point of universal suffrage the people should move in the direction of communism or not. Hudson makes use of this example to explain how Marx assumes that history moves in a specific direction and that the social is not contingent. Universal suffrage becomes so important that all institutions are established and elected – bureaucracies, the judiciary, the economy and political representatives. Marx uses universal suffrage as a subordinate, to assume that communism will happen. Therefore, Marxism is a form of totalitarianism and just like totalitarianism, Marxism posits the possibility of absolute knowledge. Lefort draws his philosophy around opposing the essentialism of classical Marxism (and one sees the influences from psychoanalysis and post-structuralism) through his ideas on the ontology and epistemology of the social and he elaborates that 'democracy… inaugurates a history in which people experience a fundamental indeterminacy as to the basis of power, law and knowledge, and as to the basis of relations between *self* and *other* at every level of the social'.[23] On explaining the critique of Marxism, Marchart adds that:

> While Marxism understands politics as part of the superstructure and, for this reason, as being determined by the economic base (the relations of production), political science and sociology live in a different illusion: they construct their object matter through the delineation of particular facts.[24]

[19] Lefort, C. (1988b). *The Concept of Totalitarianism* Papers in Social Theory, No.2 Warwick Social Theory Centre and Sussex Centre for Critical Social Theory p. 6.
[20] Hudson, P, Exceptional State Lecture, 2015-09-04
[21] Hudson refers to Marx's text *The Civil War in France* as one example of the absolutism of Marxism, in how Marx says that he sketches the outlines of the political form for the transition to communism.
[22] Lefort, C. (1988a). *Democracy and Political Theory*. 1st ed. London: Polity Press. P. 20
[23] Ibid. p. 19
[24] Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 88

The process of indeterminacy for Marchart is understood through the delineation of facts. The removal of the fact is its deconstruction, to allow for there to be a process of reconstructing. For democratic politics, there is no base. There is always a question being put into question. The social lacks a foundation. That is why for this project I seek to demonstrate how the people in South Africa are aligned to different facts. And whether or not there exists an opportunity for these facts to be deconstructed and reconstructed. Do political parties reflect the true will of the people? I can also put this question slightly differently as a matter of emphasis; to what extent do these political parties welcome the possibility for change in the identities of the people? Do they recognise that there will always be a moment of delineation? My project is fundamentally centred on these questions and by utilising Lefort I can perhaps add value to the broader present day debates around African politics.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

3.1. Introduction

We are 25 years into our democracy and yet we still experience problems in South Africa that were there under the previous destructive regime. Our situation seems as though it has worsened. I want to explore why this is the case. I will, therefore, be taking a close look at how our institutions are structured, and consider to what extent political and socio-economic organisations are free, whether there is space for civil society to exercise its rights and the degree of openness of the broader political space in general. I will be doing this through the prism of a single debate, the afrophobic and xenophobic attacks in South Africa, using this to ask how the idea of the people finds expression within the three different main political parties. My investigation of these parties seeks to consider how they understand society as the product of differentiating versus being the product of some other underlying essence. In other words, if, according to Lefort, the idea of 'lacking a stable foundation or essence' is the foundation for democracy, the primary premise of my paper is to discuss how these parties express themselves through this formulation, i.e. whether they welcome divisions in society or whether they disregard division completely by closing up the 'field of interrogation'. The value in Lefort's work is that he sees democracy as something that frees up a unique experience of the social. By acknowledging the political nature of social constructs publicly, the function of indeterminacy becomes something we all see, grasp and accept.

The African National Congress

The case study of the ANC presents a very interesting challenge to my topic. It has been in power since the dawn of democracy and under its leadership, there has been some significant progress as well as some, if not more, significant failure. When one considers the notion of the empty place, there are certain minimum requirements for it to be empty, for instance, South Africa has a Constitution which is praised as one of the best in the world and, because of it, there are regular elections held under

conditions that respect freedom and equality. There are also other organs of state such as chapter nine institutions as well as the parliamentary committee system. All these factors in many ways, reinforce democracy in that they function to keep the space for debate and contestation open. Seemingly, and this is what I will seek to investigate, the ANC has had tendencies (as with all the political parties I am looking at) to deviate from its mandate. For example, when Jacob Zuma, says that the ANC will be in power until Christ returns, he is implicitly suggesting that the ANC has some sort of in principle right to govern South Africa.[25] This is one of the fundamental problems with liberation movements, who believe that because they have been instrumental in achieving democracy and liberation, they sometimes assume they have the right thereafter to govern those societies permanently. This is the sort of notion that runs directly counter to the empty place of power.

The Economic Freedom Fighters

According to the EFF's Commander-In-Chief (CIC), Julius Malema, the EFF was born out of the pleas of the people of Marikana in the North West Province. Thirty-four miners were shot and killed by the police in the 2012 Marikana Massacre and this was due to the historical structural imbalances that were created under apartheid that were never fully addressed once there was democracy. For instance, the name of the mine which the miners were pleading with for wage increases is called 'Lonmin', which is short for London Mine. Some of its shareholders are based in London, and yet the company owns a significant stake in the mineral wealth of the country. This is only one example of some of the realities that characterised the South African economy after apartheid. On the one hand, South Africans gained political freedom, but on the other, the ability to gain economic freedom was compromised. Which is where the EFF comes in. They aim to disrupt the status quo and challenge the orthodoxies of free-market fundamentalism. In the background of the afrophobic and xenophobic violence some of the key questions that I aim to ask are, what will they replace the current economic model with? How democratic will that process be? For instance, once the EFF gains power, how would they respond if they were ever to lose power?

The founding manifesto of the EFF says that they are a 'radical, leftist, anti-capitalist and anti-imperialist movement with an internationalist outlook anchored by popular grassroots formations and struggles'.[26] The radical character of the EFF has been witnessed in various ways. But I think it is

[25] Meeting with Peter Hudson, Audio Recording, 2019
[26] EFF Founding Manifesto (2013)

important to define what radical means according to their policy. In one instance they talk about an organic engagement with the masses. Which means they meaningfully involve their supporters and claim to have a 'constant relationship' with them. Certainly, this may be radical in the sense that they are assuming the position of an alternative to an irresponsive ANC government. One could, however, argue that holding the dominant political party accountable is not radical, it is merely just speeding up governmental processes. I will interrogate the EFF's understanding of, and their approach to the politics of radicalism as stated in their manifesto against Lefort's understanding of how a democratic society (with the help of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe) can both exist and not exist at the same time, since democracy is based on the logic of dissolution because it is indeterminate and radically contingent.[27]

The Democratic Alliance

Lefort does not necessarily say that the empty place of power means that all societies should ultimately end up being liberal democracies. He is making the argument that the political space should always have room to change between different forms of society. This political space must always remain open. What the DA appears to be is a party which does exactly the opposite. It is a party which wants to lock the social into a liberal democracy without the possibility of ever changing or, for example, ever becoming a social democracy. One would think that they are more in-line with the notion of the empty place of power because in its essence the DA is fundamentally opposed to the idea of locking anything in. When their only focus becomes a certain social system, and making it permanent once it is achieved, they become opposed to the idea of the empty place, and I argue this later through their stringent stance on immigration. Hudson,[28] makes the point that Francis Fukuyama, in his book, *The End of History and the Last Man*, puts forward the idea that history has come to an end. And liberalism is the final solution to the problems of social and political organisation, and this also implies that the place of power may henceforth be permanently occupied. This is significant to my discussion when I later look at how open or closed the DA is when it comes to its policy stance in relation to transformation. Through this argument I clarify the question as to whether or not the DA proposes that we only adopt one political system, or whether they allow alternatives.

[27] Valentine, J. (2013). Lefort and the Fate of Radical Democracy, *Critical Explorations in Contemporary Political Thought Series,* M. Plot (ed.), Claude Lefort © Palgrave Macmillan p. 204
[28] Meeting with Peter Hudson, Audio Recording, 2019

3.1.1. Rationale

Stephen Louw looks at how the ANC and its Youth League, in particular, endorsed the land seizures in Zimbabwe during Robert Mugabe's presidency.[29] He also looks at how the party deviated from its openness to debate ideology and began to appear totalitarian even though they were not. Drawing from Lefort, Louw argues that the identity of the people will always remain latent because society is uncontrollable. The land seizure movement is a prime example of what Marx and Engels argue in their *Manifesto of the Communist Party* to be a continual uninterrupted uncertainty characteristic of modern society. Elsewhere Lefort argues that a modern totalitarian society arises from a mutation of the symbolic order or a political mutation. This political mutation is what we observe in the land seizure situation in Zimbabwe and the ANC's support of it. I want to attempt to make a similar analysis of the afrophobic and xenophobic attacks situation in South Africa and how all three parties have positioned themselves on this matter.

Lefort adds that the political party will claim to be different from all the other parties, stating that its views are more progressive than the others, in an attempt to embody the aspirations of the people, to place itself above the law.[30] The EFF, for instance, will say that Afrophobia emanates from a hatred of self among the African people which comes from a colonial experience and further reinforced by white monopoly capitalism. At one event Malema even stated that 'borders are an artificial construct' and that 'the whites are happy when the blacks fight amongst themselves'. [31] I will also analyse Floyd Shivambu's criticisms of the Freedom Charter, which he outlines in his book *The Coming Revolution: Julius Malema and the Fight for Economic Freedom*. On the other end of the debate, the ANC will argue (although not in a single voice) that, according to the Constitution, foreign nationals are welcome. However, as a governing party, one finds that there are different views on the presence of foreigners, for example when the Minister of Police Bheki Cele insinuates that some immigrants are in the country for the wrong reasons, this pushes the boundaries of acceptance.[32] The DA argues that we need to tighten border control and blames the ANC for its lack of proper administration in the Department of Home Affairs. So, when Afrophobia occurs the question of how these parties respond

[29] Louw, S. (2006). *Mysterium inequitatis: Truth, elections, autonomy in the southern African politic* Department of Political Studies, School of Social Sciences, University of the Witwatersrand, Johannesburg E-mail: Published online: 21 Nov. P. 225

[30] Lefort, C, (1988a). Democracy and Political Theory. 1st ed. London: Polity Press. p. 13

[31] Julius Malema Condemns Xenophobia https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=efgiIDuTSe8 Accessed on 2020-04-02

[32] Dlamini, P. Bheki Cele Says Government Has a Plan to End Xenophobic Attacks https://www.sowetanlive.co.za/news/south-africa/2019-09-09-bheki-cele-says-government-has-a-plan-to-end-xenophobic-attacks/ Accessed on 2020-03-30

is the central one in my discussion. Do they allow for openness, i.e. appreciating the lack of a constitutive foundation, or do they restrict openness and create a new foundation which the people should fit into? And I consider Lefort's concept of the 'people as one' (*people-Un*) where he links his reflections to the tendency of totalitarian states to construct the people as a totality.[33]

3.2. Literature Review

This project will draw considerably from Lefort's primary texts. Firstly, in chapter 4, I will look at his book titled *Complications: Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy.* A chapter of significance to me is chapter fifteen on disincorporation and reincorporation of power, where he talks about how the symbolic and the imaginary underpin the social. I will look closer at the importance of elections under democracy. I will juxtapose the debate concerning Marx and the way Lefort critiques him. As I mentioned earlier I will look at how Marx's conception of history does not allow for pluralism or a conception of a politics which determines outcomes that are always uncertain; rather, electoral preferences simply reflect stages in the constitution of wills which Marx always sees as predetermined. The work in question here is in Lefort's book on *Democracy and Political Theory.* I will also look deeper at how he argues that the political is the proper 'field of interrogation' by linking it to the idea of the 'phantom of pure thought'. Here I will rely quite a lot on Marchart as well as Flynn. In explaining the meaning of power under democratic conditions I rely on an article by Saul Newman titled *The Place of Power in Political Discourse*.

I use Saussure's idea of the 'signifier' from his book titled *Course In General Linguistics*[34] because it has played an important role in the way political philosophers and theorist's think about the social. Saussure has come to be known as the father of structuralism through his theory of language. He has become a common reference point in social and political philosophy, and his conceptualisation of structure has had a profound impact on western thought. Structuralism, through the theory of the 'signifier', is a field of knowledge that moves attention away from essentialism or the concrete nature and 'common' understanding of the subject and offers an understanding of the social as a system of concepts or a network of differences and relationships. This relatively new understanding considers Saussure's linguistic 'sign', which is the relationship between a 'signifier' and the 'signified', and extends this relationship into the structure of the social which is the reason I rely on him for my

[33] Flynn, B. (2005). *The Philosophy of Claude Lefort Interpreting the Political*. 1st ed. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press p. 213
[34] Saussure, F. (1974). *Course in General Linguistics*, Fontana

discussion. The whole argument around a 'signifier' is to show that the social can exist without a foundation. There is no absolute bearing upon which it stands or upon which it is rooted, there is nothing outside the system of differences that holds everything together, and that is why it is arbitrary.[35] To understand the concept of the 'sign', one has to understand that the 'signifier' and 'signifieds' are relational entities - what is important is how each 'signifier' relates to another 'signified'. Saussure proposes a relational constitution of identity and introduces the symbolic, which in other words is the constitutive role of difference. I am using Lefort's extension of Saussure's analytical framework to his analysis to understand how political theory influences politics. In other words, I aim to show how the idea of differential relations can be exported into the analysis of the social insofar as the social is structured like Saussure's conception of language.

For my empirical arguments, from chapters 5 to 7, I will look at political party documentation and manifestos and ask how they address the question of the people in relation to foreign nationals in general and to the Afrophobia and Xenophobia question in particular. I will look at some literature from research bodies and political commentators including a study done by the Human Sciences Research Council (HSRC) from 2008, titled *Citizenship, Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa: Perceptions from South African Communities*. I also consider an article written by Tasneem Essop, titled *Populism and the Political Character of the Economic Freedom Fighters - a View from the Branch*, where she applies Laclau's idea of populism to the identity politics of the EFF.

I will also look at the views and discussions by political figures in media briefings and how they view the debate on Afrophobia. I want to explore the narrative of foreign nationals 'stealing jobs' and whether this is a real concern or an opportunity by some parties to gain popular support towards elections, clearly showing a lack of commitment to the democratic project. I will also draw on the ANC's affiliate, the South African Communist Party's (SACP) material and in particular, an article that was written by Hudson and Louw which was a response to historian Colin Bundy on the significance and features of the type of social democracy that was proposed by the SACP during South Africa's transitional period. As an ANC affiliate, the SACP influences ANC policy to some degree and, I want to also establish to what extent this is, especially concerning the question of Xenophobia. Lefort deals quite extensively with the notion of communism and how it fails to recognise the empty place of power, therefore, I would look at the SACP on this level. In other words, in dealing with Afrophobia and Xenophobia to what degree is the ANC drawing from the SACP? Lastly, I will look

[35] Hudson, P. A. (1986). *Causality and the Subject in a "Discourse-Theoretical" Approach to Marxism.* December. p. 5

at the role of parliament and chapter nine institutions and how they operate in freeing up the 'field of interrogation'.

3.3. Research Question

In the main, I am looking at the policy documents as well as the actions of the main political parties in South Africa, alongside the work of Lefort.

Key Question

- By looking at the afrophobic and xenophobic attacks in South Africa, particularly concerning their conceptualisation of the idea of the people, how democratic are these parties in the light of Lefort's formulation of the empty place of power? (Do they recognise that they do not inherently have a right to rule?)

It is important that I acknowledge the complexity of the question at hand, fundamentally because virtually nowhere in the world are non-citizens in any country afforded equal political rights. This thesis does not make the claim that this should be the case. However, in dealing with the question of the people through the question of foreign nationals is a feature of the debate which is unique. I intend to look at the finer details of what these three parties pronounce and how well they implement these policy objectives regarding foreign nationals and immigrants. Can the ANC produce any qualitative reports on how it has managed to deal with all the violent incidents that have occurred since 2008?[36] Can the EFF and DA successfully claim that they have consistently made attempts to hold the ANC accountable during this period? How do these parties' views operate within the frameworks of their particular constitutions and whether or not they fulfil their mandates? This is important because it will allow a greater understanding of the complexities of negotiating between policy formulation and policy implementation particularly around the themes of citizenship or the people. For example what the Freedom Charter argues versus the EFF's blood nationalism stance around the subject. However, the latter may be unable to accommodate different identities because its 'blood and soil' nationalism ideology makes Whites and Indians the 'other'. It would still be opposed to xenophobic attacks and is therefore not a straightforward '(South) African' nationalism. I will also look at the linkages between the EFF's revolutionary practices and Thomas Sankara's revolutionary doctrine. All the three parties

[36] 2008 was the year the xenophobic attacks boiled over.

I am referring to have within them dissenting views around identity politics and the discussions around 'othering' that are inherent to the debate. How much freedom do such voices enjoy in these spaces? This is a critical question because it is very close to the kind of impact that could be achieved on the ground within the communities in which the violence against foreign nationals happens. The layer I am trying to bring through Lefort is that of understanding what I mentioned earlier about bridging the gap between ideology and social practice. My analysis will be an attempt to look closely at the South African political landscape through the Lefortian lens.

3.4. The Extended Case Method

I will be relying on social scientist Michael Burawoy's explanation of the 'extended case method' to approach this project. This method is useful because it opens up the social sciences to a broader way of both knowledge application and generation. It primarily draws from reflexive science in the study of ethnography to remove universals from particulars, and to proceed from the molecular to the aggregate, and bring together 'the past in anticipation of the future, all by building on the pre-existing theory'.[37] I aim to extend the case of Lefort to the socio-political landscape of South Africa in the same way Burawoy's analysis draws from various theories as a way to prove their validity through their relevance and applicability to the ground. Burawoy points out that it is possible to draw from a variety of experiences that are relatable to pre-existing theories, and similarly it is possible to have theories that match experiences in the field: the molecular being a particular case study; in his case, it was his experience in Zambia. And how this case study, further contributed to a body of scientific knowledge which is then the aggregate theory.

In one instance Burawoy noted that he encountered certain policies that were created in an ad-hoc fashion to address labour conditions in mines 'to justify decisions already made'. As an expert in policy work, he had to use his own experiences along with the extended case method to validate and legitimate labour policy which was created after the fact. He discovered that this method allows for experimentation beyond any finalisation of data accumulation, i.e. even after decisions are made. '…With the extended case method, dialogue between participant and observer provides an ever-changing sieve for collecting data'. This point allows me to introduce and possibly locate Lefort and his ideas and their relatability within the political discourse of South Africa. This is because data collection is an ongoing process, virtually any theory can be adopted depending on the nature of the

[37] Burawoy, M. (1998). *The Extended Case Method*, Sociological Theory 16:1, University of California, Berkeley, p. 3

data. In my case, policy on foreign nationals is constantly being modified due to the identity and subjectivity of the people who themselves are subject to change. Earlier on I mentioned how the social is subject to chance and to change. Therefore, by extending the case of Lefort, I can locate several examples in the political landscape of South Africa that are in-line with his ideas to argue the significance and possibly the necessity of the place of power remaining empty and thereby use Lefort as a baseline for this project.

3.4.1. Reflexive Science Approach

> …reflexive science elevates *dialogue* as its defining principle and *intersubjectivity* between participant and observer as its premise. It enjoins what positive science separates: participant and observer, knowledge and social situation, situation and its field of location, folk theory and academic theory. The principles of this reflexive science can be derived from the context effects that pose as impediments to positive science.[38]

In his work Burawoy discusses how reflexive science[39] is an alternative to positive science as a research method in the social sciences. This is because positive science fails to accurately capture the environment which it seeks to study. Positive science is removed from its subject and takes a view of the world from the outside looking in. Burawoy's main argument is that positive science is sufficient, however, reflexive science is efficient. He categorises reflexive science under four different 'context effects' namely: 'intervention', which relates to the unavoidability of opposing views by interviewer and interviewee; 'process', which speaks to situational dynamics of participants through space and time captured by a social process; 'structuration', which takes into account the consideration made by social scientists that the everyday world shapes, and is shaped, by external forces; and, lastly 'reconstruction', and this context effect speaks to the goal of any study which is to reconstruct theory. Reflexive science is premised on the logic of dialogue as a principle of what could be the difference between either the progressive or degenerative reconstruction of a theory.

For my project, I only have interest in the context effects of 'process', 'structuration' and 'reconstruction'. 'Process', because my study is partly empirical and will be drawing significantly

[38] Ibid. p. 13

[39] Reflexive science is crucial to Burawoy's extended case method. The two are not mutually exclusive, rather Burawoy depends on reflexive science to reinforce the extended case method.

from political party websites, libraries, archives, minutes of meetings, documentaries, press statements, articles, journals and speeches. This is necessary so that I may establish the situational dynamics of each party to explore the framing of the people regarding their appreciation or lack thereof of Afrophobia and Xenophobia. 'Structuration', because this is the field in which whatever it is that the researcher is attempting to grapple with occurs. It is the external factors which shape society, and are beyond our control which reflexive science offers a way into understanding. Lastly, 'reconstruction', because I am trying to reduce the abstract element of introducing a particular theorist into a particular landscape. I am trying to deconstruct Lefort's arguments through my analysis with the hope that I make some 'surprising predictions',[40] for example of how political theory, in general, can inform social processes and in particular, how I could contribute to adding meaning regarding the empty place of power (regarding the people) through investigating the ANC, EFF, and DA.

Reflexive science allows one to deeply study the context of an argument as a point of departure, but should not be understood as a point of conclusion. And what I draw from Lefort is how he speaks to the socio-symbolic preconditions that allow for a democracy to operate in the first place. I am presenting his discussion of the people as a foreground to an ongoing debate around the fundamentals of democracy in the 21st century. I approach this work not in isolation from the realities on the ground, but through a fusion between party policy and political theory. Reflexive science allows me to integrate Lefort into the Freedom Charter, for example. It allows me to identify ways in which political theory can speak to the lived experiences of communities fighting for better living conditions. It is through this method that I can trace elements of our society and bring them back into a Lefortian reading, and vice versa.

According to Burawoy, a social situation always contains different actors, and all of these have multiple knowledges. Reflexive science captures these multiple narratives through what he calls the aggregation of 'situational knowledge [via] social process'. Social processes are the cumulative studies of different narratives of a single case and are always reliant on earlier theory.[41] The various actors I seek to speak to are the political parties, along with their multiple knowledges (policies). I look at how I can link these via social process to Lefort. This is necessary if I seek to make the argument that Lefort and his theory of the empty place of power capture the aggregate of these narratives. Not by saying that they should all recognise that the place of power should remain empty, but rather by trying to

[40] Op. Cit. p. 16
[41] Ibid. p. 15

measure their proximity to the arguments made by Lefort in his theory of the empty place of power. My goal, quite importantly, is to also understand Lefort and make some contribution to the idea of the people in political theory discourse in South Africa.

The case I am speaking to is an understanding and shaping of the people, according to the different political parties in how they deal with the question of Afrophobia and Xenophobia. I am trying to investigate the situational knowledge (theory and policies in a particular space and time) of each party, concerning social processes (how they frame the people in acting and responding to Xenophobia based on their theory). This project is therefore primarily theoretical and I am reliant on the lecture series by Peter Hudson in his course on the *Exceptional State* which he taught me in 2015 at the University of the Witwatersrand alongside Stephen Louw. This material is largely in the form of audio recordings. I will also be drawing from different primary and secondary literature that are books, journal articles and discussion documents.

Reflexive science also enables me to investigate the social situation as opposed to the individual. This is because the sampling method under positive science fails to account for the broader social environment when it is only based on individuals.[42] The idea is that data sampling is not able to fully capture a general argument due to this, however using reflexive science one can 'move from one generality to another, to more inclusive generality'. In other words, different theories can inform one master theory. It deals not only with observed patterns but also with the environment external to those patterns yet influencing them. And the idea for me is not simply to agree with Lefort but to try to locate his theory more broadly within the South African political space in an analytical manner. Moreover, reflexive science has a dialogical element to it, between its four elements which allow me to navigate the literature from its most elementary level through to its most complex meaning. This is why I can insert Lefort by drawing on the similarities of his arguments and the situational knowledges formed through a social process, i.e. the debate on Xenophobia according to the political parties. Even the theory of the empty place of power did not fall from the sky. It is the result of not only data collection but also of the analysis of multiple narratives which do not necessarily agree with each other. This is why any theory can 're-enter the wider world of participants,… to be adopted, refuted, and extended in intended and unintended ways, circulating back into science'.[43]

[42] Ibid. p. 16
[43] Ibid.

3.4.2. The Extension of Theory

In the main, my project seeks to extend the theory of the empty place of power to the framing of the people in political discourse as well as practice in South Africa. Burawoy offers a methodological approach which argues for theory-as-dialogue. It is the open-endedness or indeterminacy of theory which allows one to extend it to particular social settings. Burawoy's analysis is that positivism cannot address externalities whereas reflexivity allows one to have a macroscopic account of everyday life.[44] It is by taking a closer look at what shapes society that allows one to unpack from both the vantage point of the outside as well as the inside through participation, to give a wider angle of the argument presented by the theory being put forth.[45] In other words, using the extended case method I can dig into the system at play and put my theory to the test within the system to understand it. It is the symbolic that gives value and meaning to the structural. More importantly for Burawoy, the focus should be the moment at which people create the distinction between theory and practice or between the 'system' and the 'lifeworld'.[46] Lefort defines the people within a particular space and time to give meaning to his theory, which is what the logic of emptiness rests on, the ability of the people to distinguish between not necessarily 'what' it is they value, rather 'how' they value what they value. For example, the French Revolution exposed the people to the power of the political. For Lefort, freedom was essential but what was more important was how the people attained their freedom and enhancing the mechanisms that enabled them to, mechanisms which were previously unavailable under a monarchical rule.

Similarly what I am trying to do is assess (through Lefort) how political parties give meaning to how they define the people, through their policies by looking at their stances on Afrophobia and Xenophobia. I am trying to understand whether the three political parties understand Afrophobia and Xenophobia as bi-products of an unfair system or as something else. By definition, Afrophobia is prejudice by Africans against Africans whereas Xenophobia is prejudice against people from other countries.[47] And using the extended case method, Burawoy expresses his ideas and argues that from his observations he can produce meaning along the lines of understanding, specifically, the 'regimes of power' (as an example) over a said space and time. Using Marxism to further elaborate, Burawoy

[44] Eliasoph, N. Lichterman, P. *Reconstructing the Extended Case Method* Sociological Theory 17:2 July 1999 © American Sociological Association. University of Wisconsin–Madison 1722 N Street NW, Washington, DC 20036 p. 228
[45] Op. Cit. p. 15
[46] Op. Cit. p. 229
[47] Masenya, M. J. *Afrophobia in South Africa: A General Perspective of Xenophobia* Bangladesh e-Journal of Sociology. Volume 14, Number 1. January 2017 p. 91.

brings our attention to the copresence of relations, which is the Marxian understanding of production.[48] At the core of this argument is the idea that productivity drives the relations between the workers and the capitalists, and this relation reproduces itself over time because workers need to survive. When the workers continue to go to work daily, they in tandem subject themselves to the power of the capitalists, who then define the division of labour and all its features under the 'political regime of production (or power)'.[49] Burawoy adds that:

> The point is simple: production becomes reproduction only under a particular structure of power. We can compile situational knowledge into an account of social process because regimes of power structure situations into processes.[50]

I am trying to align the understanding of the reproduction of regimes of power to what we observe to be the case with the people concerning Afrophobia and Xenophobia. Social processes which arise from the patterns of behaviour and decisions made by the people or society (social action) become the factors which reproduce that regime of power. When the people participate along the lines of the processes of defining foreign nationals as an 'other', these processes then become reproduced. I am trying to link this argument to my discussion from a theoretical perspective by looking at how society functions to create ways that allow it to change the way it relates to itself. In the same way Burawoy uses Marx's schema to present a case for his argument through a particular case study and his own experiences, I am using Lefort to attempt to reconstruct an understanding of the relationship between the people and the social anomaly that is differentiation in the forms of these two types of discrimination.

Another example Burawoy presents is Frantz Fanon's theory of the 'postcolonial revolution', which helped him in his analysis of the Zambian succession anomaly within the mining sector. Burawoy uses Fanon to argue that the problems of the Zambian mining sector were similar to the ideas presented by Fanon in his formulation of the labour aristocracy or 'petty bourgeoisie',[51] where Fanon proposes measures of realising and achieving an economic or industrial revolution.[52] The same way Burawoy studies Zambia, Fanon, uses the case of Algeria.[53] The 'prime feature of this revolution according to Fanon occurs when society nationalises the zone of the middleman, which is the trading sector of the

[48] Burawoy, M, 1998. *The Extended Case Method*, Sociological Theory 16:1, University of California, Berkeley, p. 18
[49] Ibid.
[50] Ibid.
[51] Ibid. p. 21
[52] Fanon, F. (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth* (Paris: Presence Africaine), p. 149
[53] Ibid.

economy. The aim is to dislodge any attempts at using the system for individual gains, corruption and sabotage. It is also there to avoid the black market trade which slows down the process of generating a national income'.[54] While the Zambian government did nationalise the mines, doing away with colonial middlemen, Zambians themselves became elitist as soon as they began enjoying higher positions in the mines when they replaced the European expatriates. According to Fanon the bourgeois class that emerges is itself underdeveloped in the sense that it has no real power, even its preoccupations have no real consequential effect on the economy of the nation.

This 'lazy middle class' has no substantive commitment to nationalism and pays no mind to the masses. They form alliances with the nationalist parties who preach about economic restructuring but are not at all familiar with the 'actual and potential resources of their country's soil and mineral deposits'[55] that they can only give a superficial account of their understanding of the economy. They do not set in motion a new type of economy; instead, they keep the old one running. Theirs is mainly the role of replacing the previous colonial professionals with themselves. At this level, the transfer of power is a transfer of job titles and roles. They assume the responsibilities which were previously held by their colonial masters. They achieve this by using the ideology of nationalising the economy because what they understand to be nationalisation simply means a transfer of advantages from the colonisers to the natives.[56] Burawoy sought to extend Fanon, to analyse the 'dissection of class interests' and he adds that the use of Fanon's class categories has helped argue that Zambianisation is more than just African Advancement, but it was an exposure of the distinction between macro and microeconomic forces influenced by a regime of political power within the mining sector.

3.5. Ethical Considerations

No interviews were conducted and thus an ethics waiver was completed and submitted.

[54] Ibid.
[55] Ibid. p. 151
[56] Ibid. p. 152

CHAPTER 4

LEFORT ON THE PEOPLE

4.1. Pre-Democracy, Democracy and Totalitarianism

Looking at Lefort's thought as a source of inspiration, we can rethink politics in South Africa from both a theoretical and practical perspective. In the first place - and this is from Marchart - it is important to mention the idea of 'sloganisation'. The empty place of power could be misunderstood as a simple slogan which sounds interesting, and I would risk continuing on the trajectory of the banality committed by Lefortian readers who trivialise the meaning of the empty place of power by interpreting it as democracy simply being a system whereby no one can just claim they have an apriori right to govern.[57] But this is not enough. Lefort's theory is premised on the ontological condition of society, and this means that he is more concerned about how power is constructed than what kind of form that power takes i.e. he is not proposing a particular type or form of democracy. This is why Lefort concerns himself with the shift from pre-modern, to democratic to totalitarian societies. When he talks about the ontology of the social he is referring to the possibility for change to always exist. The people may not always be satisfied with a single form of society and thereby want to change it. Lefort constantly compares democracy to totalitarianism, particularly to bring about the idea that the latter creates limitations for the people because it goes against their ability to change the form of society. He does this so one can grasp that totalitarianism 'runs against the grain of the ontology of the social'.[58]

In *Complications: Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy* in the chapter on the disincorporation and reincorporation of power, Lefort argues that one of the key features of power is that it moves beyond the control of even those elements that try to institute and enforce it such as kings under pre-

[57] Marchart, O. (2007) *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 86

[58] Karayiannides, E. (2016) *Lacan Against the Radical Democrats: Logic, Sexuation and Why We Should Insist Upon the Primacy of the Class Antagonism*, Honours Research Paper, Department of Political Studies University of the Witwatersrand, p. 6

modernity or dictators in totalitarian states.[59] It only appears visible in these individuals because they claim to have it or be its 'supposed…stewards'. Yet, because it is symbolic, power is accountable only to itself and therefore it is impossible to restrict it by placing it in a particular place. This is why it is always 'visible and open to all by means of myths, rituals, ceremonies and religious elaborations'.[60] The symbolic function of power is thus to point at its internal dynamics by means of signalling its own elevation. Power is never grounded. Lefort further uses philosophy to explicate his case by drawing on the idea of science being unable to deal with the question of the 'phantom of pure thought'.[61] He argues that all experience in the world is the result of an unyielding process of thinking. It is the non-metaphysical nature of thought that is constantly and consistently at work in the world and this informs how we shape it. One could deduce from this idea the fact that it is the people who inform the social. This is why Lefort argues that the social has no constitutive foundation, because it is shaped by how people think, and thinking is itself 'an infinite form of interrogation'.[62]

When Lefort spends a great deal of his work contrasting democracy and totalitarianism one gets a sense that this is because he is trying to create meaning via the process of differentiation. If we continue on his logic of society being symbolically constructed then it does make sense to say one can best understand democracy in relation to its opposite, totalitarianism. And he continues to say that the social has its own specificity, what this means is that it allows for the possibility for society to take on any particular form. This is because of another Lefortian concept which is the idea of the 'dissolution of the markers of certitude' which is not only a specific phenomenon but what Lefort argues, '…defines the universal, that is, ontological, horizon of our condition'.[63] I will explain this concept later, but for now, the idea is that totalitarianism does the opposite of dissolving those markers. It introduces its own markers to create unity by the removal of the 'other'. When the people in a particular society fail to recognise difference or division, they are in essence creating one form of identity, locking that society into one form without the possibility of it ever changing. That society may not be totalitarian, but it can contain features that make it similar to a totalitarian state. This locking in is in contradiction to what Lefort means when he talks about the 'irreducible element', which refers to the 'mystery of history'.[64] Under pre-modernity, it is the idea that religion (or transcendental god) was the constitutive

[59] Lefort, C. (1999). *Complications: Communism and the Dilemmas of Democracy,* Columbia University Press: New York p. 142
[60] Ibid.
[61] Op. Cit. p. 88
[62] Ibid.
[63] Ibid. p. 86
[64] Lefort, C. (1988a). *Democracy and Political Theory*. 1st ed. London: Polity Press. P. 213

foundation and under totalitarianism, a single identity forms that basis (a dictator or single party). History is thus not a mystery in pre-modernity and totalitarianism. This is because both these forms of society dictate that there is a final knowledge of society. Thus the social can be reduced to a particular element.

4.2. The People, Modernity and the Subject

I am trying to investigate the relationship between the people and the political. According to Lefort, the political is the space which gives meaning to the social. It is the proper 'field of interrogation', the dimension within the ontology of the social which allows for various possibilities. Democracy recognises the political and that is why it allows for the identity of the people to change, whereas totalitarianism does not. When Marchart refers to 'conflict as foundation' he means that every society is rooted in division. To return to the idea of differentiation (or more explicitly antagonism) Lefort argues that division gives rise to the '(im)possibility of any formation or form-giving process' which also means that we can only understand the social concerning what it is not. And this is why society recognises itself concerning its other.[65] Democracy recognises that there is an absence of an 'ultimate ground' which is why it always needs to view itself outside of itself. Lefort also argues that totalitarianism is subject to a democratic revolution, which is the moment when the social is split apart with the possibility of reordering. The only difference is that totalitarianism tries to deny the moment of the split. Under pre-modernity, the place of power resided in the king because the king was legitimated on two levels. Marchart refers to Lefort's analysis of Ernst Kantorowicz's well-known imagery of the 'king's two bodies' in this instance. The first body is that of society and the second that of god. And the moment of democratic revolution represents the splitting of the one body of the king, into two, hence the axiom. This is the moment we can see indeed that power is symbolic because as soon as society rejects the king, they reject his power.[66] The body of the king may remain, but it is emptied of its essence. Power moves from the king to whatever the people may want next, which is why Lefort argues that power is contingent. Modernity can thus be summarised as the opening up of the space of the endless possibilities in which a society can constitute itself via the democratic revolution.

[65] Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*, Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 92
[66] Ibid. p. 94

> Once the democratic revolution has occurred, every regime – democratic or not will have to come to terms with the absence of an ultimate ground and with the unbridgeable chasm of division that opens up in place of such a ground.[67]

Totalitarianism denies the principles of democratic revolution. It tries to squeeze modernity into an essentialist mode. It only recognises one form of the people and under such conditions, the body of the king is replaced by the body of the dictator, 'egocrat'[68] or single political party. There is thus only one form of the social with no requirement for it to recognise itself concerning its other. Under totalitarianism there is no other, thus making the place of power not empty. It tries to reduce the symbolic into a particular ultimate ground by denying the existence of division. Similar to the pre-modern era where the power of the king was legitimated by his divine nature, totalitarianism legitimates itself through the principle of unity. Whereas the king's power is both social and transcendental, power under totalitarianism is legitimated by the desirability of a single identity: the people as one. Leaders under totalitarian states embody the people and construct a law which then becomes embedded within all social spheres. Subsequently, that law becomes superior and binding to all human beings both as individuals and as a people.[69] Lefort refutes this by saying that it contradicts the very idea of law, because once a law is cast in stone it fails to recognize any novelty. It eradicates the element of contingency. It fixes that society into a particular trajectory closing off the possibility of reconstruction. The law destroys itself and potentially that society. This is fundamental because the law is constructed via the movement of history, what the law was meant to be, which is this transcendental mediator between dissenting voices now refutes such a possibility. Under totalitarianism '…the criteria for distinguishing between the permissible and the prohibited vanish…'[70] People organise themselves along a set path of history and they fail to recognise any opposition to domination and organisation. Very recently the Russian President Vladimir Putin has asked the Russian Constitutional Court to change the limit on the Presidential term. Should he succeed, then the law would be put to a vote by the Russian people.[71] This act shows that Putin believes that he has some hegemony over the Russian seat of power, i.e. that the place of power must reside with him.

[67] Ibid. p. 96
[68] The Egocrat is the ultimate bearer of knowledge in a dictatorship; he personifies all the relations of the existing social order. Calhoun, C. (1992). *Habermas and the Public Sphere,* MIT Press.
[69] Lefort, C. (1988a). *Democracy and Political Theory*. 1st ed. London: Polity Press. P. 49
[70] Ibid.
[71] Doward, J Sunday 15 March 2020 06.20 GMT https://www.timesofisrael.com/putin-approves-law-that-could-keep-him-in-power-until-2036/ Accessed on 2020-04-02

The dissolution of the markers of certitude refers to the freeing up of the subject. By this Lefort is referring to how the collapse of the medieval world liberated the subject from being trapped in a world defined in and by religion. Lefort would argue that when Putin changes the Constitution he is trying to reintroduce new markers of certitude. He is realising that he is nearing the end of his term and therefore because he holds the place of power he can decide to approve a law that will allow him to remain president till 2036.[72] He is trying to lock the Russian people into a set path which rejects anything either than himself as president. Similarly, when Marx responds to the collapse of the medieval world he introduces a teleology of history which follows a set trajectory and as such he also, once again encloses the subject.[73] Hudson argues that although Marx is a thinker under modernity, what we have here is a situation where modern thinkers (Marx and others) repress modernity and what Lefort is trying to do is retrieve the original meaning of modernity as the freeing up of the subject. Lefort argues that these thinkers have fled back into the domain of 'ontological necessity and epistemological absolutism'. If Putin became president for another two terms this would mean he determines the degrees of power, law and knowledge in Russia even though the country exists under modern conditions. Power, law and knowledge under totalitarianism are reconstituted as the new markers of certitude because they cannot change. These markers thus inform the political institutions in such societies, removing the possibility of freeing up the subject and the people, and the ability for them to change. However, Lefort argues that what happens in the social is contingent. This is fundamental under democratic conditions. The people are allowed to have a say on how society should be constituted and the direction society should move.

Flynn goes further by arguing that Lefort recognises that the pure individual bears within herself the 'ambiguity of the universal [or] an ambiguous signification which implies a certain kind of universality'.[74] This ambiguity means there are no markers of certitude. There is no solid ground and therefore how can any markers be emanating from a ground which does not exist. Power, law and knowledge are fluid and not rigid. Flynn adds, that the history of human rights is linked but not riveted to a particular space and time.[75] The collapse of Soviet Russia indicates the ambiguity of history or the removal of the rivet which totalitarianism attempts to fix it with. The collapse further shows that there is no permanence in the order of the social. It is a moment when the splitting of the ego occurs. A moment where the subject is liberated from the necessary foreclosure which emanates from an imposed

[72] For two further consecutive terms.
[73] Hudson, P, *Exceptional State Lecture*, 2015-08-07
[74] Flynn, B. (2005). *The Philosophy of Claude Lefort Interpreting the Political*. 1st ed. Evanston, Illinois: Northwestern University Press p. 181
[75] Ibid.

identity under totalitarianism. Democracy recognises that people should be in control and not controlled.

4.3. The Universal and Universal Suffrage

The fundamental feature of democracy is that it asserts that no particular 'signifier' has the right to occupy the place of power unless it is selected by the people. In this sense, the universal means the place of power, and there is always some particular occupying that place. This is necessary for societies to exist. To give substance to the ontological, there has to be an ontic.[76] The ontic refers to the laws which need to be passed or those specific institutions managing the affairs of the society. There needs to be a government to administer basic functions for life to happen. The important thing is that the particular is not permanently occupying that place. It is not 'fused'.[77] In other words, democracy respects the gap between the universal and particular. The gap represents respect for the circulation between different particulars. This gap could also mean that moment when power is suspended. What Hudson calls the 'vanishing moment',[78] is when the people try and give a new meaning to society, because if they do not there would be disorder. The strength of democracy is that it recognises that power, law and knowledge may change and circulate. Under modern conditions, the point of suspension further represents the moment of the split between one identity and another. The concepts of power, law and knowledge become subject to that splitting and each other,[79] moreover because power is not permanent there is a separation of these elements and this is what Lefort calls the constitutive division. Each concept interpenetrates the other to give its meaning, also without being reducible to one another. There is no centre but there are elements of a social structure locked together in a system of difference. The first advantage is that one can account for the specific effectiveness of each instance, they are distinct but they are not fully autonomous. This is where Marchart uses the term of a 'chiasmatic relation'.[80] Relative autonomy argues that a 'signifier' is relatively autonomous from other 'signifiers'. It is not swallowed up, neither is it self-sufficient. In terms of the superstructure (the universal), the instance of power is not independent of it, and neither is the superstructure self-sufficient i.e. independent from other instances (power, law and knowledge).

[76] Dahlstrom, D. (2013). *The Heidegger Dictionary*, New York, Bloomsbury Publishing. p. 146
[77] Hudson, P, Exceptional State Lecture, 2015-08-07, (part 2)
[78] Ibid.
[79] Under the signifying dyad power, law and knowledge are understood in relation to each other. They are not defined by some 'Truth' which holds them together. Instead they have meaning because they are separate but related.
[80] These concepts are both separated and connected.

Lacan elaborates by suggesting that even the subject herself is divided in as much as society is divided. This allows her to take up any identity she desires. When she abandons her old identity for a new one she has to go through a moment of interregnum.[81] At this moment, power is suspended, and 'the people' does not exist. Democracy is meant to be that regime that does not control the people, rather it is the people who are in control. And Hudson gets the idea of this 'vanishing moment' from Slavoj Zizek, who argues that at this moment the people become the 'vanishing mediator'.[82] Which means that the place of power is emptied for one particular to fill it, and in a democracy, this process is a habitual one.[83] What this means is that elections are normalised because power is always contested. This is important because no universal can accommodate all particulars equally across the political landscape while at the same time expecting a harmonious society that is free and without conflict to prevail. Therefore the only way to bring about some stability is for one particular to assume the place of the universal and to organise society in terms of its particular identity - although temporarily.[84] The idea of the symbolic allows democracy not to be perpetually frozen.[85] This freezing of identities is my primary focus in my discussion of the people. Can political parties unfreeze themselves for new identities to emerge? Or are Afrophobia and Xenophobia direct results of a lack of unfreezing? When this freezing happens, the universe is no longer contingent, and cannot be changed by human practice. Universal suffrage is the point of full acceptance of the contingent. The concept of elections thus means that society dissolves itself and at the same time reconstitutes itself.

Flynn argues that in trying to get rid of externalities, totalitarianism even fabricates the existence of an 'other'. This is important for my project because perhaps one of the main reasons behind the xenophobic attacks could be that the people are trying to get rid of externalities. Totalitarian states do this so that there may be a single identity in society. Therefore, leaders in such countries are always concerned with spreading propaganda and using fear to remain in power. One graphic example of this was when the North Korean President Kim Jong-Un publicly executed his Defence Minister because he was sleeping during a military parade.[86] The minister was not guillotined, neither was he hanged or poisoned. An anti-aircraft gun was placed directly in front of him and he was blown to pieces. Lefort is interested in certain phenomena that are determined by a political form and the relation of that

[81] Op. Cit.
[82] Zizek, S. (2008). *For They Know Not What They Do Enjoyment as a Political Factor*, Verso, p. 185
[83] Op.Cit.
[84] Ibid.
[85] Hudson, P, Exceptional State Lecture, 2015-08-07 (part 1)
[86] BBC, *North Korea Defence Chief Hyon Yong-chol 'executed'* https://www.bbc.com/news/world-asia-32716749, accessed on 2020-03-18

political form to the ontology of the social without an agent necessarily underlying those phenomena. It is not so much Jong-Un who Lefort is concerned about but the political form of the North Korean republic that enables his actions. The political form or the structuring of politics is the effect, not a particular subject or agent. This form of othering turns on its head what Marchart means when he says that difference is the source of social cohesion. Once they have reached a point of full power, leaders of totalitarian states have to create a hostile opposition and label it as a threat to progress. Totalitarianism seeks to destroy division but, at the same time, it manufactures divisive tools so that it may remain locked into one identity. The 'egocrat' seeks to master the meaning of society as a whole to maintain a monopoly over the totality of power.[87] This idea is thus in full contention of what Lefort describes as the positive evaluation of conflict which is a principle he takes from Machiavelli.

> Machiavelli's discovery – which allowed him to found modern political thought – is the discovery that an irreducible conflict exists at the centre of every polity.[88]

A positive evaluation of conflict results in social cohesion, while a negative evaluation results in creating the breeding grounds for violence to reign supreme. Under pre-modernity, the terrain of power was contested between the nobles and the people. The nobles were interested in oppressing the people so that they would increase their power and hold over resources; the people, on the other hand, had no desires in being oppressed nor fulfilling the desires of the nobles. This resulted in the negative kind of conflict.[89] Thus the conflict is positive in so far as it respects the 'field of interrogation' and negative in so far as it does not. Lefort talks about a symbolically regulated antagonism, which is, in essence, the positive summation of conflict. It is always there in all societies and Marchart adds that it is not regulated in the sense that it limits the desires of the people, instead it is regulated in that it extends the various possibilities available to the people.

4.4. Democracy as a Premise for the 'Empty Place' of Power

Drawing from Newman's account, when he talks about the concept of a symbolic place of power in political theory, he argues that what Lefort means by the empty place of power is that under democratic conditions the place is empty primarily because of the idea of 'antagonism as the duality between

[87] Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 97
[88] Ibid.
[89] Ibid.

partial indeterminacy and partial fixity'.[90] Newman argues that this conceptualisation runs counter to Michel Foucault's understanding of the place of power as based on absolute difference and heterogeneity. In the first instance Newman argues that from a Foucauldian premise, power is itself 'thoroughly dispersed and decentralised' and therefore it is not possible to permanently situate power in a particular symbolic place. But according to Zizek, Foucault makes an error by denying the symbolic dimension of power and only seeing power as 'concrete' and therefore particular.[91] Newman thus argues that power operates on two levels which are: the methodological and the analytical. The former refers to power as relations enacted by means of force and the latter refers to the process of making meaning through discursive practices. Newman takes this understanding of power a step further by proposing that there is some kind of structure to power, however, it is symbolic and incomplete. To emphasise his point he uses Etienne Balibar's formulation that power should not be seen as absolute but rather as an insufficient structure.[92] This is why power can only have meaning if it is understood symbolically. And this is also why its place is empty. In other words because power is intrinsically lacking, it is not possible for it to permanently fill a place.[93]

> It is here that Lefort's notion of democratic power is important. Lefort employs this notion of the deficiency and structural emptiness of power to argue that democratic societies are constituted on the basis of their own discursive limits.[94]

The people can only exercise their democratic power because of the idea that there is a distance between themselves and power. And the notion of deficiency refers to that distance, because nothing can be instituted permanently if power is symbolically lacking. According to Zizek, the primary purpose of power is therefore its use as a 'lever for the effective subversion of the power structure'.[95] And because power in democratic societies is deficient, any identity that is formed within the social also becomes deficient because there is no power that fully legitimates an identity. Therefore to give a Lefortian meaning to this premise, one could say that the place of power is underpinned by the distance between the ontological and the ontic i.e. between the symbolic will of the people and those institutions that

[90] Newman, S. (2004). The Place of Power in Political Discourse, *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, Vol. 25, No. 2. p. 148
[91] Ibid.
[92] Ibid.
[93] Balibar, E. (2002). *Politics and the Other Scene, Daniel Hahn* (trans). London: Verso. p. 136
[94] Op. Cit. p. 149
[95] Ibid.

enable governing. The chapters that follow present an attempt to ground Lefort's theory of the empty place through the lens of the three political parties according to their proximity to the theory.

CHAPTER 5

THE IDEOLOGY AND PRACTICES OF THE AFRICAN NATIONAL CONGRESS CONCERNING FOREIGN NATIONALS

5.1. The Root Cause of Xenophobia in South Africa: A Synopsis

In 1990, Nelson Mandela came out of prison with the promise of social democracy and a mandate from the ANC as well as the masses of creating a welfare state through the ideology of Socialism. Instead, there was a peaceful transition without any significant economic transformation. South Africa took a neoliberal turn in 1996, and although certain social initiatives were implemented over the last 20 years, the economy remains largely influenced by global forces, with half of the biggest companies trading in South Africa being foreign-owned.[96] International markets and laws behave as constraints for the government to be able to make significant changes domestically. A socialist stance is perceived as unfavourable because it is not known to have worked sufficiently or efficiently anywhere in the world. I am suggesting that one of the pertinent reasons for Afrophobia and Xenophobia is found in the question of how a nation identifies itself as a people. Lefort's lessons from pre-modernity, modernity and totalitarianism teach us fundamentally that there will always be differences. Failure to accommodate all those differences, opposing views and identities is what leads to conflict in the negative sense as opposed to the positive. The politics of identity and the politics of the economy go hand in hand. These are what Marx defines as class identities, and this is an ongoing debate in global politics. To use the USA as an example, the left argues that economic inequality is not a result of the structural conditions of capital more than it is of the unjust squandering of resources and keeping the migrants and people of colour from accessing them.[97] The place of power is about accommodating class identities, and Afrophobia and Xenophobia are both linked to class more than race. And this is because Afrophobia is Africans targeting Africans. While Xenophobia in South Africa, affects a wider

[96] Top 10 biggest companies in South Africa, https://www.ig.com/za/trading-strategies/10-largest-listed-companies-in-south-africa-190725 Accessed on 2020-03-31

[97] Marxism and Identity Politics, https://www.versobooks.com/blogs/3853-marxism-and-identity-politics 2020-03-31

range of people (usually of colour) including – but not limited to - Pakistani, Somali and Chinese nationals.

ANC officials condemn Afrophobia and Xenophobia despite occupying the very positions that enable them to be instrumental in bringing about the necessary socio-economic change. It is in theirs and South Africans' best interest to have peace, stability and order, but because of what Jean-Francois Bayart 'calls the politics of the belly'[98] politicians would rather remain slow in responding because of a fear of hurting the markets. At its 54th National Conference held in Johannesburg in 2017, the ANC resolved through its Social Transformation Sub-committee - which discusses matters related to peace, stability and social cohesion - that legislation related to Xenophobia must be enforced. Furthermore, under the empowerment of vulnerable groups section the party resolved that social challenges related to Xenophobia would:

> … Be vastly improved through strengthening integrated human settlements, through an active sports and culture programme in schools and in communities and through improving the implementation of existing social transformation policy.[99]

These are the only two instances in which the term Xenophobia appears in the conference report. The term Afrophobia is completely missing. The fact that the ruling party does not link Xenophobia to the economy, despite its appreciation of the key moments in history that have brought South Africa to where it is today, brings into question the value of its policy decisions, particularly on foreign nationals. Because of its history of inequality, South Africa needs a fundamental shift in macro-economic policy, and that means taxing the rich even more, and big businesses should be more serious on their returns on investment in their corporate social investments. This shift must be coupled with a strong sense of solidarity among the people of South Africa as well as agreement on their stance on what measures need to be taken in addressing the approach to the question of foreign nationals. Real social change requires a significant change in the economic structure this is why the violence usually happens in lower-income communities. South Africans in these communities feel like the government is more responsive to the interests of foreigners than theirs. The situation worsens when the people are of the view that whenever the ANC meet and make decisions the party considers all the dynamics that exist in these communities yet continue to fail to deliver. And at the moment the rate at which the South

[98] Bayart, J. (1993). *The State in Africa: the Politics of the Belly* (London and New York, Longman)
[99] ANC 54th National Conference Report and Resolutions, (2017)

African economy is transforming is too slow to meet the demands created by an increasing population with an added strain of immigrants. Moreover, because of maladministration, corruption and a lack of political will, there is little being done to speed up the process. The ANC represents the views and interests of the people and failure to deal decisively with Afrophobia and Xenophobia reflects negatively on the ANC, but equally and more importantly on the people of South Africa, even the ones who did not vote the ANC into power.

5.2. Democracy without an Empty Place under Apartheid: A Historical Analysis of how the ANC Constructs the People

White rule with its semblance of democracy under apartheid was a precarious kind. It sought to institutionalise a process of othering to firstly create a pure race which it deemed superior, and secondly to seem legitimate to the international community. Mahmood Mamdani calls this the 'regime of differentiation or (institutional segregation)'[100] which is not diametrically opposed to Burawoy's earlier definition of the regime of power, the main difference being that the former characterises the latter. Using the Freedom Charter as a starting point here I want to make a note on the type of democracy under apartheid in how it was absent for people of colour. Historically this form of oppression informed an identity of the people in ANC political discourse, and still does today. The previous synopsis serves as a guide to an understanding of the position of the ANC-led government in terms of identifying the key moments around Afrophobia and Xenophobia. The Freedom Charter was drafted in 1955 during apartheid by progressive members of the community who were involved in the struggle for liberation.[101] It was first put forward as a suggestion by the 1953 Congress of the ANC that it should be drafted through a Congress of the People (COP) alongside other alliance structures such as the South African Indian Congress, the South African Coloured People's Organisation and the South African Congress of Democrats.[102] During that period there were very few options available to people of colour because the system suppressed their freedoms. Despite this, the document became one of the most powerful tools to come out of that volatile period because it came from a united front of different ethnic groups who banded together to fight a single struggle which affected all of them. One can, therefore, deduce that the people were defined as not only those members who drafted the document but also those whom the Freedom Charter represented. They could, therefore, be of any race,

[100] Mamdani, M. (1996). Introduction: Thinking through Africa's Impasse. *Citizen and Subject: Contemporary Africa and the Legacy of Late Colonialism*. Kampala: Fountain Publishers, p. 30
[101] The Freedom Charter, (1955) http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/HIST/freedomchart/freedomch.html Accessed on 2020-03-21
[102] Ibid.

nationality or creed. And the Congress of the People was characterised not as a single event, but as a series of petitioning, lobbying and campaigning which occurred throughout different communities in stadiums, churches, houses, flats, factories, kraals, on farms and in the open.[103]

It was the struggle against apartheid that united the people and gave them a single identity. The lack of a voice which forced them to speak in one voice. Apartheid had operated fundamentally on three levels. The people realised that on the first level they were being oppressed by a system that refused them their rights; and on the second level that that same system failed to recognise them as human beings; and on a third level that there was only one racial grouping which could legitimately compete for a hold on the place of power. What apartheid did through its attempts at creating disunity was it inadvertently created unity through solidarity amongst people of colour. This is evidence that the socio-symbolic is indeed relational, in other words, that harmony is possible only through the appreciation of difference. Disharmony is created when those differences are barred from social activity and when people are reduced to non-beings. The Freedom Charter sought to create that harmony through the symbolic. Specifically, it made the following declarations:

> All national groups shall have equal rights! There shall be equal status in the bodies of the state, in the courts and in the schools for all national groups and races; All people shall have equal right to use their own languages and to develop their own folk culture and customs; All national groups shall be protected by law against insults to their race and national pride; The preaching and practice of national, race or colour discrimination and contempt shall be a punishable crime; All apartheid laws and practices shall be set aside.[104]

The Freedom Charter constructed an identity of the people that was contrary to the doctrine of apartheid. It recognised the significance of the various particulars that existed in the social and did not restrict their capacity to identify themselves through other particulars. It was a document that removed the 'ontological necessity and epistemological absolutism' created by the apartheid state. It did this through the ideological premise that no one particular could assume the place of power (become the universal) permanently. It was a document that resisted the grounding of social relations on race, or any other markers of certitude. The apartheid regime had its own markers of certitude, including rights

[103] Ibid.
[104] The Freedom Charter. (1955). http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/HIST/freedomchart/freedomch.html Accessed on 2020-03-28

and privileges that were only beneficial to one racial grouping, for instance, the Promotion of Bantu Self-Government Act, Act No 46 of 1959,[105] which was, in essence, the primary law governing the apartheid regime which promulgated that different racial groupings would live passively and separately in different areas, and more importantly, they would govern themselves. People were not allowed to define themselves outside of the racial groupings imposed on them by the regime. Apartheid created an 'ontological necessity', i.e. that there were no categories besides those created by the government. Moreover, there was one master category which was above the rest, which was white.

Apartheid also tried to prove through science and religion that people of colour were subhuman and therefore could not qualify for human rights. Furthermore, it was not just science, it had to be white science, similarly with religion, and it had to be white religion.[106] To include other races would contradict the idea of an essential race or being,[107] which is why only one race could be responsible for running the affairs of the country. At that time it was regarded as legitimate because that one race could create and change all the laws of that society, in other words, it was a democratic dispensation, however, only applicable to one race. Only white people could vote, participate in politics, occupy government positions and compete for power. On the one hand, the 'democratic' element of apartheid sought to legitimise itself through the idea of representation – i.e. all races governed themselves.[108] On the other hand, it sought to delegitimise dissenting voices, and the argument here was that apartheid could not be wrong because all races were empowered equally and could govern themselves as their own authorities with no interference from other races. The idea was to conceal contention through institutionalisation because apartheid could never have worked without some kind of legal framework as well as a political buy-in – even though that buy-in was from white constituencies only.

5.2.1. Communism in the ANC

Now let us consider an assessment of the ANC's relationship with the SACP. This is important because the SACP and the ANC are alliance partners and historically the SACP has played a major role in

[105] The Act classified black people into eight ethnic groups. Each group had a Commissioner-General who was tasked to develop a homeland for each, which would be allowed to govern itself independently without white intervention. http://scnc.ukzn.ac.za/doc/HIST/Apartheid%20Legislation%20in%20South%20Africa.htm Accessed on 2020-03-22

[106] Mohamed, I. (1995). Apartheid In South Africa https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/books/NBK225195/ Accessed on 2020-03-22

[107] More, M, *Black Consciousness Movement's Ontology: The Politics of Being,* School of the Social Sciences University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa

[108] In his book *Citizen and Subject* (1996) Mahmood Mamdani echoes this sentiment when he argues that racial dualism was thereby anchored in a politically enforced ethnic pluralism.

shaping the ideology of the ANC. I am particularly framing the discussion from the period of the transition because it coincided with the fall of communism globally which was mainly characterised by the collapse of the Soviet Union. Subsequently, it informed the ANC's concept of a National Democratic Revolution (NDR) which was a philosophy largely influenced and endorsed by the SACP. To begin the discussion I draw from Hudson and Louw's paper titled *Beware the Shining Path: the Future of the SACP* written as a very helpful and detailed analysis of both the role of the SACP in the transition towards a democratic South Africa; and the particular nature of its communist outlook for the future of South Africa.[109] The paper is useful in my project because of how it deconstructs and reconstructs the notion of the people (in particular the working class) within the ideological schema of the ANC – the concept of a 'Broadchurch'.[110] And from this article one can pick up the recognition of some of the key ideas in Lefort's thinking (although the article does not make use of Lefort) and I aim to show where and how they appear.

Primarily Hudson and Louw are critiquing Bundy's stance when he says that the SACP was moving away from the essential ideas of communism because of the collapse which created international pressure coming out of the so-called 'intelligencia' at the time. Bundy was arguing that the SACP was in contradiction to the mood of the political scene in global politics and therefore, it needed to modify its communist ideology to maintain some kind of relevance.[111] And he refers to the SACP's communism as a 'special type'. In refuting Bundy, Hudson and Louw argue that he misses the mark completely. They say this is because the SACP was arguing for the recognition of the plurality of identities within the working class in South Africa at the time. Because of this, they ventured to accommodate diversity in their quest for national democracy through socialist transformation.

> The SACP wants to try and construct anti-capitalist alliances 'within a broad based ANC-led liberation alliance, and within a still broader mass democratic movement.'[112]

The SACP was not doing away with socialism. They argued that, unlike Marx who saw communism as final political form, they did not see it as the ultimate goal for South Africa but as a means to

[109] Hudson, P. Louw, S. (1993). *Beware the Shining Path: the Future of the SACP*
[110] The ANC sometimes refers to itself as a Broadchurch. The idea refers to an attempt to consolidate and capture the many identities that constitute the South African electorate. Collinsdictionary.com defines by saying: You can refer to an organization, group, or area of activity as a broad church when it includes a wide range of opinions, beliefs, or styles.
[111] Op. Cit. p. 1
[112] Ibid. p. 4

achieving and 'deepening [the] national democratic revolution'.[113] The SACP still goes by this premise today and in its recent political report, the party says that there is a need for a second phase of the NDR.[114] What is of importance to my discussion is how they recognised the need to widen the scope of the people they represented because of the dynamics of the working class at the time, emanating from an unfair economic system created by apartheid. There was no single identity of 'the worker' instead there where:

> …divisions between unionised and non-unionised workers, between rural/migrant and urban/settler labour, between young and old, between male and female, between those with different cultural backgrounds, and between skilled, semi-skilled and the unemployed.[115]

We have been working on the premise that, for Lefort the idea of division is crucial within the lexicon of the empty place of power. When Lefort critiques Marx he is saying that his conception of history does not allow for pluralism or a conception of politics which determines outcomes that are always uncertain; rather, electoral preferences simply reflect stages in the constitution of wills which Marx always sees as predetermined. Although the SACP was allowing for pluralism, it was only doing so within the category of the proletariat, and the point I am trying to emphasise is in that regard. It does not deviate from communism. Where there is some inconsistency, however, is in the idea that the SACP did not see communism as the final goal for society yet Marx did. For the SACP the notion of predeterminism falls away because it emphasizes the constitutive process as characterised by incremental change. That is why the NDR occurs through phases. It does not seem like they have an end in sight. Thus in some instance, they agree with Lefort and in another, they do not. Regardless, in the same way any society can contain some socialist or totalitarian features; the inverse can be said about what the SACP is. A socialist party with democratic features.

5.3. The ANC as Government

The HSRC conducted a study on Xenophobia and its relation to Violence and Citizenship in South Africa in 2008. One of the chapters detailed some of the perceptions communities had on the role of government. Respondents felt as though there was a distance between themselves and the government

[113] Ibid. p. 5
[114] SACP 14th National Congress 10-15 July 2017, Political Report
[115] Op. Cit. p. 3.

where the government waited for the violence to happen before it could step in. Earlier I spoke about respect for the gap between ideology and social practice. The same gap can be used to describe the relationship between the representatives and those they represent. Where the representatives are the bearers of ideology and the representatives give material substance to ideology through implementation. In this instance, the gap has widened not so that communities can express their political interests or contend over their ideas. But the gap has widened because of a lack of consideration of the expressed concerns of the people who elected the representatives. The following extract describes in detail:

> When respondents were probed about the role and/or actions of government in the recent 'xenophobic' attacks, a general sense of dissatisfaction was expressed about government's handling of the conflict, as well as its indirect role in contributing to the escalation of an unhealthy environment between local citizenry and foreign nationals. The responses generally consisted of three subthemes: the ineffective communication and/or engagement with local citizenry around the violence and its underlying causes; the insufficient pace and processing of service delivery as contributing to tensions; and more directly perceived corruption and impropriety of government officials, especially in the police service, in their dealings with foreign nationals.[116]

After the Freedom Charter, the drafters of the Constitution under a new democratic dispensation (post-1994) created a new document called the Bill of Rights.[117] Section 7(1) of the Bill of rights states that:

> This Bill of Rights is a cornerstone of democracy in South Africa. It enshrines the rights of all people in our country and affirms the democratic values of human dignity, equality and freedom.[118]

The Bill further stipulates that concerning the extent to which the right of equality is protected, there shall be no '…unfair discrimination solely on the grounds of race, colour, ethnic or social origin, sex, religion or language'. On the one hand, the Constitution (specifically the Bill of Rights) protects all

[116] Human Sciences Research Council. (2008). *Citizenship, Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa: Perceptions from South African Communities*, Democracy and Governance Programme Human Sciences Research Council. P. 27
[117]South African Constitution: The Bill of Rights (1996) https://www.sahistory.org.za/article/south-african-constitution-bill-rights, Accessed on 2020-03-22
[118] Bill of Rights Chapter 2, Section 7-39 https://www.justice.gov.za/legislation/constitution/chp02.html

the people in the land regardless of their identities and yet officials in government do not enforce the obligations outlined in the Constitution. In this context, the political as the proper 'field of interrogation' is thus limited by the failures of the officials to enact their electoral mandate. This mandate – given by the people is in the first instance to protect and promote the Constitution, particularly with regards to equality. The failure by the local authorities to curb the hostility among the people of Alexandra Township and foreign nationals - even when they knew tension was brewing[119] - is a form of closing up the proper 'field of interrogation'. In other words, when the authorities are reactive rather than pre-emptive of violent conditions they no longer protect the Constitution instead they perpetuate hostility as a result of division and inequality. Thus the mechanism of representation is misused.

Political leaders who are unresponsive to social needs limit the people's ability to experience and enjoy the world. The violence which erupts from an unresponsive government is precisely that moment when the people begin to take matters into their own hands. This is a moment when the social structure comes into the light. It is a moment when the power of the authorities begins to dissolve because they failed to utilise that power accordingly. However, one should not mistake this for conflict in the positive sense. Unlike in the French Revolution, people are not speaking in one voice i.e. they do not have common citizenship. Rather, it is an antagonism in the negative sense because the cause of the violence is primarily an unresponsive government that fails to adequately accommodate multiple identities. In this instance, the identity of the people becomes blurred because they are represented in government (although that government is unresponsive) and they are represented in communities (although those communities are hostile to foreigners). The point here is that when leaders fail to lead, they sow divisions on multiple levels. They become directly responsible for disempowering their members as well as the people. And in so doing they misrepresent the people and distort the reasons they were elected as officials to occupy the place of power.

In a recent article, former Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU) member and political writer Ebrahim Harvey claims that the ANC is generally suffering from denialism in its approach to dealing with Afrophobia and Xenophobia.[120] The ANC may speak in the name of the people but its failure to act decisively on the question of Xenophobia is seen as a misrepresentation. Lefort argues

[119] Human Sciences Research Council. (2008). *Citizenship, Violence and Xenophobia in South Africa: Perceptions from South African Communities*, Democracy and Governance Programme Human Sciences Research Council. P. 27
[120] Harvey, E. (2019). *ANC's Denial Of Xenophobia Is Irresponsible And Prevents Solutions From Being Found* https://www.businesslive.co.za/bd/opinion/2019-10-02-ancs-denial-of-xenophobia-is-irresponsible-and-prevents-solutions-from-being-found/ Accessed on 2020-03-22

that political choices are extended in a democracy – especially when institutions are enforcing that extension - as is the case in contemporary South Africa. Thus on the level of the ontic (the standard practises within the socio-political) power becomes entrenched because the very institutions governing those in power are failing to hold them accountable. Furthermore, on the ontological level, the inability of the ontic to become fluid negatively impacts on the Lefortian premise of the social as symbolic. In other words, the extension is no longer being enforced rather it is being reduced because political choices are reduced to one. The agency of the people is taken away because even while they voted the ANC into power (and may vote them out), the nature of the political system becomes called into question. Politicians impose their authority on the people because they know that the political system will protect them till the next elections; because they are the majority party they will not be out-voted in any parliamentary motions. True to the Lefortian argument, the political party may temporarily occupy the place of power, but it is also important to investigate the quality of the tenure in which the place is occupied under democratic conditions i.e. whether during that period the political party performs according to its mandate given by the people; and whether it can be held accountable; lastly if there are mechanisms in place to remove that party (or representatives) from power as and when the people feel it no longer serves their interests.[121]

[121] Hamilton, L. (2014). *Are South Africans Free?* (London: Bloomsbury) p. 27

CHAPTER 6

THE ECONOMIC FREEDOM FIGHTERS: REVOLUTION, POPULISM AND THE PLACE OF POWER

6.1. The Role of the EFF in Freeing up the Place of Power

I begin this chapter by looking at an article written by Tasneem Essop who suggests that the EFF occupies a different political space to the ANC. [122] She argues that this is primarily because of the vacuum which has been left unoccupied by the ANC: the question of the economy. The 1994 settlement gave the majority of South Africans political freedom at the expense of economic freedom which is why in its very first election the EFF received over 1.2 million votes which were 6.35% of the national vote.[123] This is why it is one of the parties I am focusing on because they are one of the major parties to dominate the political scene and represent their constituency. In 2019 the number of total votes they received shot up to above 1.8 million votes reflecting an increase of about 4% and in that election they garnered 10.8% of the national vote and they are now the official opposition in three provinces.[124] These numbers indicate that they are not a small party. The EFF has quite consistently been able to steer the political discourse in the country through a very intuitive public relations campaign from its inception. From calling for President Cyril Ramaphosa's head over his alleged involvement in the Marikana Massacre to getting practically all South Africans to chant the words 'Pay Back the Money!' when the former President Jacob Zuma had been found to have unduly benefited from the state coffers by the Public Protector.

For quite some time the ANC had gone unchecked because there was no strong opposition in South Africa and thus no other party could get the ruling party to account for its wrongdoings. What the EFF does (and they do this quite well) is influence even the politics of the ANC in so far as its policies are concerned. For example, the debate over the expropriation of land without compensation quickly

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[122] Essop, T. (2015). *Populism and the Political Character of the Economic Freedom Fighters - a View from the Branch,* Society, Work and Development Institute.
[123] Ibid. p. 214
[124] 2019 National and Provincial Results, https://www.elections.org.za/NPEDashboard/app/dashboard.html# Accessed on 2020-03-23

gained traction in the ANC as soon as the EFF began promoting it in their manifestos. The role of the EFF has quite clearly been to free up the place of power. They have proven that their function is to disrupt the elitism created by the lax attitude of the ANC when it comes to important issues. They remind the ANC that they are not the permanent holders of the place of power and more importantly they demonstrate Lefort's arguments that there is always a possibility for there to be political change.

6.1.1. Populism and the EFF

> Demands already prominent on the ground prior to the development of populist politics are appropriated.[125]

In one of her chapters, Essop extends Laclau's theory of populism to describe the character of the EFF. Similar to what I am trying to do by extending Lefort, her premise, however, is that the identity of the EFF is largely based on the political climate of the day, which is why she claims that they are a populist movement. Essop argues that the EFF managed to read the mood of the country, and in particular entered the political space by piggybacking on a whole host of popular demands that were not being addressed.[126] Where the ANC created a gap, the EFF was there to fill it. Because the EFF is pro-poor and represents the working class they were able to link the concerns of the various communities affected by poverty and unfair labour practices to their policy objectives. Regardless of whether or not the people whom they spoke to had appreciated their policies.[127]

Another argument presented by Essop, through Laclau is the idea of the 'empty signifier' which is the idea that the space of a particular can be filled by whatever it is that the people choose i.e. people can take up any identity they desire. In her analysis, she uses the example of the wage negotiations at Lonmin where the miners were asking for a wage of R12,500. She posits that the EFF used the symbolism behind the demand to encapsulate its own popular identity.[128] The 'signifier' was thus captured by the presence of the EFF which enabled the party to appropriate other popular struggles because of the whole notion of emptiness, i.e. the place of the 'signifier' can never be filled. Similar to the Lefortian premise of the emptiness of the place of power, it moves us away from a single party dominating and controlling the political space. The EFF reinforces the notion of the circulation of

[125] Ibid. p. 225
[126] Ibid.
[127] Essop uses the term 'equivalential' to highlight the point that the EFF's manifesto and policies were capable enough of capturing the demands of the communities they spoke to.
[128] Op. Cit. p. 226

power and the ontological construction of the social. They appreciate the importance of accommodating multiple identities. It is through the idea of competing for power via the use of populism that EFF constructs the idea of 'the people'.[129]

6.2. South Africa Belongs to Africans

To continue on the idea that the EFF always captures the unmet demands of the people and turns them into their campaign tool, the same can be said in their pronouncements around Afrophobia and Xenophobia. The fundamental problem with populism is that it is not easy to monitor and quite often there is one leader who the people have invested all their authority in. In this instance, it is Malema. Essop argues that he becomes the 'unifying symbol that represents the totality of aggregated and equivalent demands'.[130] Because the nature of the ontology of the social is that it is always in flux, the people's demands are often changing too and one leader could not possibly keep up with those changes, what he ends up doing is taking up a dictatorial style of leadership to manage all the identities. Recently, in a parliamentary debate, Malema stood up in front of millions of South Africans including his constituents and said he was 'in charge', and alluded to the idea that he was in charge of the ANC too.[131] Thus in the EFF, Malema is equal to the people and vice versa.

In exploring the view the EFF holds on the question of Afrophobia, the party believes that all African borders are superficial, therefore, suggesting that in Africa there may be many identities but there is only one dominant continental identity. They argue that colonial powers imposed geographical boundaries on what was previously presumed a borderless continent. The stance of the EFF on the debate on foreign nationals is therefore centred on the impact of colonialism.[132] Colonialism displaced African identities by using division as a tool to rule the African continent, but what is more significant for the EFF is the fact that these divisions still exist today. That is why when they address issues like food security and creating sustainable jobs, their goal is not only for South Africans to benefit but 'southern Africa and the African continent as a whole'.[133] Its radical philosophy is not only about being revolutionary for the sake of the word but they are concerned – in Sankara's formulation – with

[129] Ibid. p. 227
[130] Ibid. p. 226
[131] WATCH | 'I Am in Charge ... I Have the Ruling Party by the Scrotum' says Malema during SONA debate. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=aI7Si7Z_5TA Accessed on 2020-03-23
[132] Julius Malema Intensifies Call For The Collapsing Of Borders In Africa. https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Afsy5mNwQD8 Accessed on 2020-03-23
[133] Shivambu, F. (2014). *The Coming Revolution: Julius Malema and the Fight for Economic Freedom*, Jacana Media: Sunnyside, p. 4

bringing together the ideas of revolutionary theory and turning them into revolutionary practice because this will be the deciding factor between what makes them lasting revolutionaries or those who 'flock to the revolution for motives foreign to the revolutionary cause'. [134] It now becomes understandable why anything that opposes colonialism will be adopted by the EFF for the sake of its revolutionary objective.[135] Linking Afrophobia and Xenophobia to colonialism is not only factual but it is also a political tool used to defend the EFF's revolutionary mandate. However, one of the issues with the radical stance of the EFF and its identity politics is the question of exactly how much openness do they contend for? For instance in referring to Laclau's critique of the 'proliferation of particularisms', Newman warns that the creation of too many identities could potentially lead to the corrosion of the political field. This is because the political field also relies on the possibility of some kind of a new universal dimension, which is essentially the idea of reaching a new political form emerging from the 'vanishing moment'.[136] Which is why the 'vanishing moment' is transient i.e. it cannot be permanent. So the question for the EFF is: what is their proposal in managing the 'explosion of new political identities and struggles' that emerge from the idea of universal subjectivity that could be interpreted in their articulation of a borderless community?

One could still argue that the EFF operates as a catalyst in not only opening up the 'field of interrogation' but also maintaining its openness. As discussed earlier, they represent the moment of interregnum in how they reinforce the splitting up of the social. When the ANC becomes too comfortable the EFF is very quick to shake them out of their slumber. Interestingly, at one point EFF Member of Parliament (MP) and Spokesperson Dr Mbuyiseni Ndlozi called out MP Maite Nkoana-Mashabane, who was at that time the Minister for International Relations and Cooperation, for sleeping in parliament and referred to her as a 'Sleepist!' As if there was nothing wrong that the Minister did, she woke up from her slumber and reprimanded Ndlozi for waking her up. This is what Sankara talks about when he refers to the backward forces opposing the revolution.[137] The slumber of the ruling party is not only literal but it is also symbolic. The ANC is slow in responding to matters of national importance as a result of its claim that it legitimately holds the place of power due to its role as a liberation movement. It thus suffers from the sins of incumbency at the expense of the people it

[134] Sankara, T. (2007). The Political Orientation Speech: October 2, 1983. *Thomas Sankara Speaks: The Burkina Faso Revolution* 1983-87. London & New York: Pathfinder, p. 61
[135] Davis, R. (2013). *Remembering Thomas Sankara, the EFF's Muse.* Daily Maverick, https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2013-11-05-remembering-thomas-sankara-the-effs-muse/ Accessed on 2020-03-23
[136] Newman, S. (2004). The Place of Power in Political Discourse, *International Political Science Review / Revue internationale de science politique*, Vol. 25, No. 2. P. 145
[137] Op. Cit. p. 58

represents. The EFF enters the space as a sort of insurance policy for the people in general (the citizenry of South Africa). And this is because their role is to protect the space for conflict in the positive sense, and what I mean here is that they enable the respect for debate around policy formulation and implementation; change in the law; and oversight with regards to transparency and accountability. Another way of saying that they function as the sight of a symbolically regulated antagonism by extending the scope for democratic possibilities while leveraging on the dissenting views of those who disagree with the ruling party.

6.3. A Marxist-Leninist Tradition and the Empty Place

In his critique of Marxism, Lefort argues that the mistake Marx makes is to propose a foreclosure of the political terrain of contestation with the eventuality of one party and one state. The leftist politics of the EFF advocate for this foreclosure as well, not only in the adoption of Marxist-Leninist doctrine but also in how they apply it in practice. For instance, the EFF calls for the nationalisation of key sectors of the economy and the removal of foreign ownership within these sectors. One of the first major demonstrations of the EFF in their show of power was to march to the Johannesburg Stock Exchange (JSE) with over 40 000 fighters in attendance.[138] Their memorandum included a list of demands which included the nationalisation of mines and the Reserve Bank, they also wanted JSE-listed companies to stop labour broking; lastly, they wanted a national minimum wage of R4,500.[139] These examples do not necessarily contradict the idea of freeing up the space for robust political debate and action, but they do suggest that the EFF strongly accepts the Marx's premise of state ownership which is tied to grounding society under one absolute political form. They could be interpreted as deviating from the very role they perform of allowing for the political to accommodate various identities. In the Lefortian sense, the premise of Marxism is rejected because of the idea that it rejects the idea of the social being contingent. If the goal of the EFF is for South Africa to one day become a communist state then this means it fails to recognise the openness of democratic conditions. The degree to which the EFF practices Marxism reflects the degree to which it reinforces what Laclau and Mouffe refer to as the 'unconditional order' of the social.[140] When the EFF fails to breakdown the

[138] Nicholson, G. *EFF marches: 'This isn't a Mickey Mouse organisation'*. Daily Maverick https://www.dailymaverick.co.za/article/2015-10-28-eff-marches-this-isnt-a-mickey-mouse-organisation/ Accessed on 2020-03-23

[139] #Effmarch: We Want To See Economic Freedom In Our Life Time, http://www.702.co.za/articles/6011/malema-all-systems-go-for-eff-march-for-economic-transformation Accessed on 2020-03-23

[140] Bertram, B. (1995). *New Reflections on the "Revolutionary" Politics of Ernesto Laclau and Chantal Mouffe*. boundary 2, Vol. 22, No. 3 p. 85

'unconditional order' they fix human relations into an absolute truth. In other words 'any attempt to definitively suture the social space results in totalitarianism'.[141] In its attempts at being revolutionary the EFF could end up biting off more than it can chew, and it perhaps needs to reformulate its translation of Marxism into better practice.

Failure to recognise the openness of the political space also presents another contradiction to the EFF. Removing the possibility of change in the political means that they reduce the options available to the people. Which makes them vulnerable to limiting the rights of foreign nationals concerning Afrophobia and Xenophobia. How can they, on the one hand, say they represent the poor and working-class via expropriation of land without compensation as well as the nationalisation of the means of production, yet on the other limit the access available for competing views in the socio-political landscape? To what extent can they call for open borders if they also restrict contestation in how the economy should be run? The two questions above raise uncertainty around the nature of the politics of the EFF. In their founding manifesto, they mention that: 'The EFF will also advocate for the ultimate integration of the African continent through the erosion and eventual elimination of unnecessary borders…'[142] There seems to be an incoherence in the policy premise of the EFF due to its Marxist doctrine which fails to accommodate circularity and dissenting views while at the same time promoting the free movement of foreign nationals between states. Although the EFF may not be totalitarian in the strict sense of the word this type of thinking is indicative of some form of determinism or foundational politics. In political theory, foundational politics is an attempt to ground politics on something, be it race or a teleological vision of history, whereas post-foundational thought attempts to do the opposite.[143] The EFF in this instance seems to derive the identity of the social in some way from a foundation, without considering various social identities and instead they argue for one political identity which emanates from a said trajectory of history.

[141] Ibid.
[142] EFF Founding Manifesto (2013)
[143] Marchart, O. (2007). *Post-Foundational Political Thought: Political Difference in Nancy, Lefort, Badiou and Laclau*. Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, p. 155

CHAPTER 7

CITIZENSHIP VERSUS BORDER CONTROL IN THE DEMOCRATIC ALLIANCE

7.1. Introduction

> Under 24 years of ANC government, the issue of immigration has become a powder-keg in South Africa, primarily because of the failure of the ANC to provide leadership on the issue. Our borders are left unsecure, there are insufficient human and technical resources of the SANDF and we have a shambolic Department of Home Affairs; riddled with corruption and incapable of addressing the monumental challenges facing the country. At the root of all these problems is a lack of leadership and political will to make the decisions that will keep South Africa safe and ensure our prosperity. This is not what we were promised in 1994.[144]

The DA is the main opposition party in South Africa and the only opposition party currently in charge of a province. It is considered as one of the parties that represent a minority constituency within the political landscape of South Africa. Historically it stemmed out of what was known at the time as The Progressive Party founded in 1959 during apartheid.[145] Since then it has merged with various political parties to eventually become known today as the Democratic Alliance. Its ideological framework is liberal-democratic, although it sometimes calls itself a centrist party that advocates for open access for all members of society and generally doing away with the politics of the belly or the cronyism witnessed within the ANC.[146] It has been criticised for its constant focus on the wrongdoings of the ANC rather than presenting its own ideas. The main argument has been that it appears to be a reactionary political party with no plans of governing because its vision has always been limited to the degree to which the ruling party fails on its mandate. It is only until recently that the DA has made a

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[144] DA Immigration Plan 15 October 2018

[145] Democratic Party Return from The Wilderness. (1999). http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/360189.stm Accessed on 2020-03-23

[146] Values and Principles https://www.da.org.za/why-the-da/values-and-principles Accessed on 2020-03-23

pronouncement to become less absorbed with the ANC and more focused on executing its mandate based on its policies.[147]

Similar to the EFF the DA also has the problem of inconsistency when it comes to the question of immigration as well as creating an open society for all. It is quite firm on securing borders and taking drastic measures in reducing the number of foreign nationals entering South Africa. The contradiction is evidenced in the fact that they want to restrict access on the one hand, and on the other hand, create more access. The challenge for this type of thinking is in the fact that they may have to classify who has access and who does not, which would mean going against the grain of their policy imperatives. When they say the ANC lacks the political will what they mean is that the current leadership of the country is afraid to make hard decisions regarding the question of foreign nationals. Among the many proposals, the DA makes in its 16-page long immigration document is to strengthen border control by creating more points of entry and exit to alleviate the pressures on the borders and at the same time train more immigration officials and police officers to manage the situation.[148] However, the entire document says nothing about the historical context of how South Africa got to where it is as a country. It does not consider the role it played as a party during the 1994 Convention for a Democratic South Africa (CODESA) negotiations. Furthermore, it places too much emphasis of the immigration problem on the incompetence of the government and in particular the Department of Home Affairs and no attention to the economic conditions in South Africa.

7.2. The Dilemmas of an Empty Place: Immigration, Economics and Scare Tactics

South Africans in the townships and informal settlements do not only have a problem with mushrooming spaza shops [149] owned by foreign nationals, they also have to compete with huge corporates who can build a shopping mall at any moment. South Africa has witnessed a Shopping Mall boom over recent years which has largely left poorer communities wanting because they are heavily reliant on sustaining themselves through the informal economy and small businesses. Given this dynamic, more pressure is placed on the township community and animosity towards local foreign-owned businesses increases. There is a negative social impact too: essentially more people are shopping even though they cannot afford to. The booming of shopping malls creates a facade lifestyle for low-

[147] Steenhuisen: Maimane Focused Too Much On Bashing ANC https://ewn.co.za/2020/01/31/steenhuisen-maimane-focused-too-much-on-bashing-anc Accessed on 2020-03-23
[148] DA Immigration Plan 15 October 2018
[149] A colloquial term used to describe a small grocery store.

income earning citizens who cannot afford many of the goods in the malls. They walk into these shops with a dream of one day affording to buy the goods but only walk out of them carrying the symbolism of having walked in. In poor communities having entered a 'high-end' store gives one status. Middle-income earners have to resist the temptation of purchasing goods through instalments. High-income earners are comfortable and are often the ones who benefit the most because they can afford going out for lunch and dinner every day. Such a lifestyle is a luxury to the poor, yet it is a norm for the rich. It is well known that the private sector is a profit-oriented machine, yet there is very little regulation on their practices. Businesses have no concern for the dynamics that exist within the township communities because they are withdrawn from the lived experiences of the locals and foreign nationals. Some of the main findings in the parliamentary *Presentation on 2008 & 2015 Reports Probing Violence Against Foreign Nationals* attest to this; they found that:

> South Africans affected by high levels of unemployment and poverty establish **survivalist businesses** that receive minimal or no support from government and thus **are particularly sensitive to increased competition.**
>
> **Unfair advantage.** It was alleged that some small businesses are owned and funded exclusively by big businesses. These small businesses are at an advantage because they are able to procure cheaply from the big businesses.
>
> **Ownership challenges.** Some businesses are registered with the South African Revenue Services but are run by foreign nationals sometimes making it difficult for SAPS to trace persons implicated in crimes.
>
> The proliferation of **shopping malls** with no consultation or partnership with existing small businesses **results in the closure of many small businesses.**
>
> **Security related risks** e.g. in Gauteng some ex-military personal from other African countries were allegedly residing in communities, the mushrooming of unregistered places of worship, small businesses and NGOs found to be a front for illicit activities such as brothels or trade in narcotics.
>
> **Exploitation of foreign nationals by organised business** requiring longer hours for less pay than, particularly in sectors such as tourism, taxi services, gardening and

> domestic services, car guarding and security services etc. This creates resentment amongst South Africans. Foreign nationals are also exploited because of not being unionised or being undocumented.
>
> **Nevertheless** some foreign nationals ran to the SA police for protection showing trust in the South African Constitution, which guarantees protection of all people in South Africa.[150]

Moreover, in one instance, these businesses have also been criticized by locals who feel that they would rather employ foreign nationals not because they are more employable in any regard but because they are willing to work for less wages. In another instance, the dominant narrative has been that South Africans are lazy. To create a more stable society the government and private sector need to find common ground to alleviate financial pressure burdens for the many South Africans who live beyond their means; and those who feel uncomfortable with buying groceries from Pakistani owned spaza shops.[151] In an Africa Check article anthropologist and researcher Dr Zaheera Jinnah from the African Centre for Migration and Society has tried to clear some of these misconceptions by saying that:

> International migrants in South Africa are more likely to take jobs that locals are not willing to take or find work in the informal sector… studies suggest that this is because the informal sector offers the lowest entry cost into the labour market. The majority of international migrants also come from African countries which have large informal sectors.[152]

The DA fails to consider such realities. Instead, they centre their campaign against Xenophobia on using scare tactics in the hopes that foreign nationals will go back home.[153] At one point during the 2019 election campaign, they proposed a stringent deportation programme to reduce the levels of violence because foreign nationals had been taking measures to defend themselves due to law

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[150] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. (2019). *Presentation on 2008 & 2015 Reports Probing Violence Against Foreign Nationals,* https://pmg.org.za/committee-meeting/28849/ Accessed on 2020-04-06

[151] The Informal Economy of Township Spaza Shops. (2015). *Sustainable Livelihoods Foundation*

[152]Wilkinson, K. (2015) Analysis: Are foreigners stealing jobs in South Africa? https://africacheck.org/2015/04/17/analysis-are-foreigners-stealing-jobs-in-south-africa/ Accessed on 2020-03-29

[153] Former Johannesburg Mayor and DA member Herman Mashaba proposed a "shock and awe" technique to instil fear among foreign nationals. Cameron, J. (2019) *Xenophobia alert as DA, EFF beat the anti-immigrant drum – #Election2019* https://www.biznews.com/africa/2019/04/24/xenophobia-alert-da-eff-election2019 Accessed on 2020-03-24

enforcement failing to protect them.[154] In the Lefortian formulation, by removing the foreign national from the equation the DA is effectively placing them in the category of a hostile other. They disallow the possibility for identities to be differentially determined. In doing so the party effectively becomes anti-political because in the quest for unity they recognise only one identity. Through these utterances, the DA is doing away with the possibility for change for the people. It is thereby locking the social into a certainty. It creates a transcendental premise which the people should all subscribe to, not only by instilling fear in the foreign nationals but also creating a false sense that the South African people do not want outsiders living in their country. The DA may, in essence, be a liberal-democratic organisation but its stance on immigration makes it seem like it subscribes to foundational politics. By closing off the borders it locks society into a particular without the possibility of it negotiating an entry for another particular. The DA universalises its doctrine without accommodating any other doctrines that may contend with it. The logic of the empty place would rather insist on one doctrine as particular rather than universal, i.e. for it to be temporary rather than permanent.

7.2.1 The DA in Parliament

Following the outbreak of the 2008 xenophobic violence, the National Assembly resolved to convene a task team to investigate the matter.[155] The task team comprised of MP's from different political parties. Its mandate was to go on the ground and meet with community leaders and councillors responsible for administering services in those locations. The areas visited were townships, hostels and informal settlements because these were hotspots for the violent attacks, places like Alexandra, Tembisa, Germiston and the Reigerpark/Ramaphosaville settlement area.[156] At one of the meetings, the DA enquired whether the violence had any links to the alleged corruption over the allocation of housing in the Alexandra area, particularly the houses owned by foreign nationals. In response, the director of the Alexandra Renewal Project (ARP), Mr Julian Baskin, denied this. He told the delegation that there was some foul play in the area but this had no connection to the government or the ARP. Criminals were pretending to be government officials and selling RDP houses to unsuspecting people.[157] In this instance, the role of the DA is quite visible in the way it holds government officials accountable by asking questions concerning the livelihoods of the residents of Alexandra. They are

[154] Ibid.
[155] Parliament of the Republic of South Africa. (2008) *Report of the Task Team of Members of Parliament Probing Violence and Attacks on Foreign Nationals* http://pmg-assets.s3-website-eu-west-1.amazonaws.com/150612TastTeamReportXenophobicAttacks.pdf Accessed on 2020-04-06
[156] Ibid. p. 2
[157] Ibid. p. 5

essentially playing the role of protecting the institutions that are there to ensure that the will of the people is well respected. By so doing they also bring to light the main concerns within the socio-political domain that are linked to the debate on foreign nationals, protecting them and South Africa's citizens. The DA is using the correct mechanisms to protect the interests of its members, its constituency, the South African public and foreigners. Thereby promoting the idea of accommodating differences and protecting the space for public contestation over the various possible identities the people seek.

7.3. Ideological Representation versus Practical Misrepresentation

The liberal-democratic canon of the DA is representative of the values and the vision the party has for South Africa.[158] They advocate that a truly democratic country is one where all people are treated fairly and with equal access to opportunities. Whenever the DA speaks in parliament they always speak about a better tomorrow; in education, their slogan is 'Preparing for Success'; in health it is 'Quality Care for All'; in social development its 'Breaking the Cycle of Poverty'.[159] These policies all reflect a respect for the indeterminacy of the social because they resonate with a Lefortian liberal premise in several instances. In education, they consider the future by advocating for those without proper funding to be supported by the government to be skilled enough for the job market. In health, the focus is on building more infrastructure to accommodate the demand created by an increasing population. In social development, the DA calls for a R6,000 community service voucher for all high school matriculants who cannot find employment as well as a universal old-age pension across the board.[160] In the Lefortian formulation, DA policy reflects a modern state in freeing up the number of possibilities open to its citizens. These policies show that there is room for society to progress in no predetermined pattern and that the contingent character of the social should always be taken into account.

Recent events in the DA have however indicated a completely different reality within the DA. Several senior members within the DA left the party because they no longer felt that it served their best interests; some also say that there was a purge against those who were calling for more progressive and transformative policies; others added that the DA did not reflect what it stood for in practice and thus

[158] Duncan, J. (2011). The Ideology of South Africa's Democratic Alliance, https://africasacountry.com/2011/06/the-politics-and-ideology-of-helen-zille/ Accessed on 2020-03-31
[159] Breaking the Cycle of Poverty (2008). The DA's plan to give better opportunities to all South Africans
[160] Ibid. p. 18

no longer resonated with the interests of the people.[161] Perhaps one of the more noteworthy departures (which is significant for this project) was that of the DA's head of policy Gwen Ngwenya who left the party because she felt the DA had not taken her portfolio seriously and instead chose to invest more in creative marketing rather than lasting policies. In a letter she wrote to Mmusi Maimane who was the leader of the DA at the time – who also subsequently left because he believed the DA was no longer a party fit to steer the nation into a free and prosperous future – Ngwenya says:

> In addition, I would receive resources to fulfil the job, as well as the ability to recruit my own staff. None of these terms were partially, let alone wholly, fulfilled. Instead I was often hung out to dry in the face of unhappiness with policy within the party, there were untouchable policy areas, no budget was designated to the policy unit, and no additional staff could be hired.[162]

The DA failed to empower its policy expert who was designated to make recommendations on transformation within the party. The DA seems to be inconsistent in theory and practice. If it is unable as the main opposition to hold itself accountable, it is most unlikely to be able to hold the ruling party accountable too. Its incoherence distorts the relationship it has with the citizenry of the country, both those who vote for it as a viable alternative to the ANC and those who do not vote for it but still regard them as necessary. Its rejectionist stance on transformation also gives the impression of the authoritarian style of leadership by not considering the requirements stipulated by the liberal democratic ideology it follows. Furthermore, the backlash the party received after Ngwenya's resignation indicated the moment of split between the DA's anti-political style of leadership and its support base. At that moment the people were rejecting the DA.[163]

The inconsistency and lack of transformative politics of the DA also bring into question how it views the identity politics that come into play concerning foreign nationals. After some analysis, the argument can be made that because the DA is untransformed it, therefore, represents an untransformed support base i.e. those who support the DA do not want foreign nationals in the country. While support for the

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[161] *Helen Zille agrees that 'whites are leaving the DA and blacks are transforming it'* https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2019-10-25-helen-zille-agrees-that-whites-are-leaving-the-da-and-blacks-are-transforming-it/ Accessed on 2020-03-24

[162] Mjo, O. *DA Policy Head Gwen Ngwenya's Exit Brings Party's Policies Into Question* https://www.timeslive.co.za/politics/2019-01-24-da-policy-head-gwen-ngwenya-quits-accuses-party-of-being-more-focused-on-billboards/ Accessed on 2020-03-24

[163] Ngwenya subsequently returned to the DA and assumed her former position due to the mounting pressure from dissenting voices.

DA did decrease in the 2019 elections due to several factors which include its draconian stance on foreign nationals, it remains the main opposition party in South Africa. Moreover, further analysis has shown that the DA limits the views of its members as well as its employees. The party thus becomes more dictatorial by refusing the antagonisms that go hand in hand with the Lefortian democratic ideology. Hence, in this particular aspect, the DA is undemocratic on two levels; it opposes the views of the foreign nationals and it unilaterally decides that South Africa should be a homogenous country. Because every social form is subject to the possibility of democratic revolution, the DA may be unable to sustain its grip on power as opposition, this is because it will have to reconstitute itself afterwards as something else.

CHAPTER 8

CONCLUSION

To argue that South Africa is a democracy, more specifically that South African political parties are democratic in a Lefortian sense has value because one can relate the theoretical underpinnings of the empty place of power to South African political discourse. To capture my discussion let me introduce Hudson's analysis, he says the following:

> It is true that on the one hand in South Africa that the place of power is empty in the sense that there is no political formation that is in a position to permanently occupy the place of power. Therefore, both the Constitution and the institutions of our society, implicitly and sometimes explicitly acknowledge that there is no group that is entitled, by right to occupy permanently the place of power. Lefort's lynchpin is the idea that the social structure is open or indeterminate. That it does not have a fixed and absolute structure and therefore, because the structure of society is not fixed and absolute those who occupy power in that society are themselves neither fixed, permanent or absolute. Thus the emptiness of the place of power relates to the emptiness of the social. The fact that social identities are not predetermined. They are symbolically constructed. Now in our society, the problem is that although the Constitution, and it is a straightforward liberal democratic Constitution, which insists on regular elections held under certain conditions that respect freedom and equality. And that is the sort of bare minimum for talking about an empty place of power. So we have got that, and, and we have got other institutions, chapter nine institutions and other aspects of our democracy, the parliamentary committee system that all in many ways, in my view, reinforce democracy, but [the problem] as we well know, within politics itself, there are tendencies that go in the opposite direction.[164]

[164] Meeting with Peter Hudson, Audio Recording, 2019

By using Lefort I have deconstructed the ideological framework of three of the main political parties in South Africa and found their incoherences, limitations and contradictions. In some instances all the parties, in Hudson's words, seem to go in the opposite direction of reinforcing democracy. In other words, they sometimes deny that the people are differentially constructed. Although South Africa has come a long way in opening up the space for debate and even holding regular elections nationally, provincially and locally, there remain some areas that require improvement. The identity of the people becomes distorted whenever those spaces are not respected, valued and protected. In addition, quite a lot of meaningful engagements are lost when these parties go to elections because they would rather concentrate on gaining as many votes as possible regardless of whether or not they deviate from their policy objectives and for the ANC this is so that it can remain in power, for the EFF and DA, it is so that they can replace the ANC.

This discussion brings me to another weak area for all the three parties concerning the gap between the people and the party. The political representation system in South Africa can be understood through an analysis of this gap which should in some instances be kept open and in other instances, it should not be too wide or open. The gap closes whenever representatives become too authoritarian because they impose their decisions on to the people or when the single political party feels that 'it alone, represents 'the people'; and when it fails to distinguish between party and the state'.[165] However, when the gap is too wide, citizen's needs are not fully met because they cannot enjoy full access to their representatives. What is important is for representatives to operate from the middle ground of this gap. The political party should be a tool in the hands of the people to run a government based on the will, needs and desires of the people i.e. it is the people who decide on the policy government carries out through the political party. Fanon states that the party 'is an organism through which they as the people exercise their authority and express their will'.[166] The party will be able to play its part when there is no confusion over its role, essentially meaning that the gap will be appreciated and respected by the political representatives.

These are some of the points of contention which arise through the Lefortian paradigm which should enrich the debate around representation and the people. Elections are supposed to be a moment when the identity of the people can change but when political parties distort their messaging in their campaigns to seem popular, they fail to respect this moment because they misinform the people. How

[165] Hamilton, L. (2014). *Freedom is Power: Liberty Through Political Representation* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press) p. 157
[166] Fanon, F. (1963), *The Wretched of the Earth* (Paris: Presence Africaine) p. 177

representative are these parties if they are not sincere in their messaging? The value of the 'vanishing moment' can only be measured in so far as it yields the best results favourable to the people. Moreover, in order to get the best results the people have to be given real and valid information about who they will choose to represent them. Meaning once the moment has vanished and a new party is elected that party needs to have been completely transparent in its campaign messaging and policy objectives. The analysis about appreciating the middle ground of the gap between the party and the people is essentially one about respecting the emptiness of the place of power because the gap is symbolically empty as is the symbolic power to which I have been referring to. The middle ground of the gap represents the respect for the power and effectiveness of the decision making process. Furthermore, it represents the ability of movement from one identity of the people to another or from one form of the social to another.

This project has also explored the degree to which South Africa's democracy – through its political parties – has freed up a 'sui genris' experience of the social. I have investigated the three parties mainly from the premise of Lefort's definition of the political as the proper 'field of interrogation' whereby different particulars compete to become the universal. To some extent, each of the parties demonstrates the capacity to open up the boundaries of debate within the social domain. The ANC's continued endorsement of the Freedom Charter demonstrates an attempt to keep the various approaches to decision making open in its respect for group rights and individual rights. It does this through a political pronouncement of community that appreciates a variety of identities and this is best captured by their constant reference to South Africa as belonging to the people. I have also demonstrated that the value of the EFF is fundamentally in its radical approach to reinforcing Lefort's logic of institutionalising a positive conflict within the social. Evidence of this is seen in the way the EFF has become the third-largest political party in South Africa despite having recently emerged through the support of a constituency previously neglected by the ANC. Although it has tendencies of grounding discussions around essentialist or absolutist philosophy, it also manages to acknowledge that robust debate is what keeps the place of power empty and this is seen through their progressive efforts in parliament in keeping the members of the ANC awake. Of the three parties, the DA has not adequately shown that it appreciates the principle of differentiation particularly between individuals and groups within society. This is because of its internal contradictions seen on the one hand by senior members leaving the party because they see it as anti-transformative and the dismissal of employees with dissenting voices, and on the other hand, capitalising on the xenophobic violence by using scare tactics to get rid of the foreigners.

This thesis has attempted to explain what Lefort means when he talks about power becoming an empty place. He is saying that the place of power is no longer occupied – by a person or a party, or underpinned by a foundational-absolute source of Truth. This makes it possible for citizens to publicly debate and define the membership of the community. Both afrophobic and xenophobic violence would appear, at least in part, to be derived from an absolute non-political conception of belonging, or community, or citizenship – the other that can be excluded. My analysis suggests that each of these parties do not efficiently meet these prescripts despite their very progressive policies. The main issue lies in the distance between these policies and implementing them. Perhaps it is true that no party can fully meet Lefort's prescripts, and I do not argue that they should. Rather, my analysis looked at the extent at which the parties meet these prescripts fundamentally on three levels; how they open up the space for debate or accommodate divisions; how they articulate the idea of the people; and to what degree they appreciate that society has no underlying foundation and can therefore change, allowing for the possibility of new political identities to emerge.

A full appreciation of an empty place of power would not necessarily only be for political parties to enjoy exclusive access in the domain of competitive politics. It would also mean that people, through their own unique experiences of the world, are enabled to engage within society and determine what direction they would like to see their world take. Additionally, they would have an unlimited amount of options available to them. This is what Lefort means by freeing up the social. Multiple social constructs all negotiating to expand their possibilities and perhaps even opportunities. What is more interesting is that democracy puts this idea out in the open for everyone to see and even feel, so that even the smallest voice can be heard. The empty place of power liberates various identities, concepts, ideas and social constructs. Under democratic conditions, the fact that these identities are always 'radically indeterminate' i.e. in conflict with one another, means that neither of them will dominate the other. What we see unfolding in South African politics is the 'uncontrollable adventure' of different political parties competing over the right to temporarily occupy the place of power. So that 'what is instituted may never become established'. In a practical sense we see the adventure happening in parliament whenever a State of the Nation Address is disrupted. We see it when a key witness gives an explosive testimony at a Commission of Inquiry into State Capture. We see it when sitting Presidents are removed from office before their term ends. These are some examples of how useful institutionalised conflict under a democracy can be, as a premise for accommodating diversity via the people and the people via diversity.

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